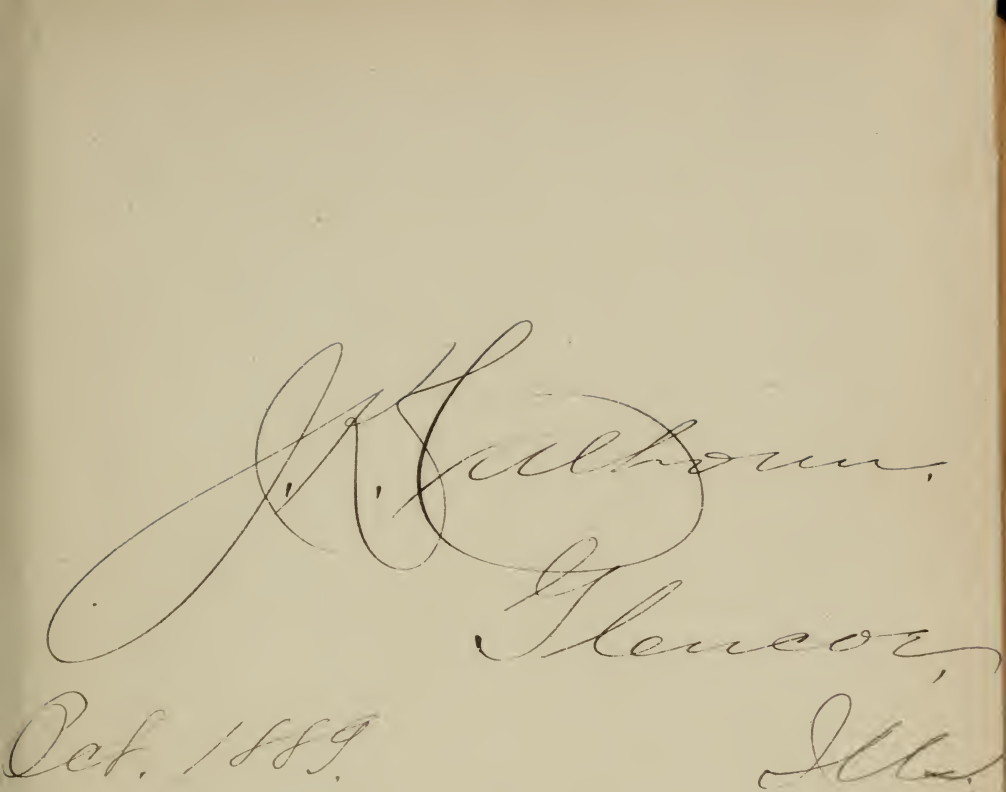
J. Kalbaum.
Oct. 1889.

HOW TO JUDGE OF A PICTURE

FAMILIAR TALKS IN THE GALLERY WITH UNCRITICAL LOVERS OF ART

BY

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PREFACE.

THE nature of this little book may be told in a few sentences. It had its origin in an incidental way. At the exhibition of the oft-referred-to Morgan Collection I was unexpectedly called upon to play the pedagogue to two young people who wanted to know what there was in "those homely peasant faces of Millet" that people liked so much, and why the landscapes of Corot were considered such very superior art when they were "not half finished." Pleased by their request, and thinking that perhaps I had at last a genuine mission to fulfill, I proceeded to explain as best I could the difference between pictures good and pictures bad, and how and in what spirit all pictures should be looked at. The task was no easy one, and how it was performed remains

for the reader of these pages to decide. Suffice it to say that the talk was exhaustive, and possibly exhausting to all parties; no sooner was one painter disposed of than another was inquired about; and when all had run the critical gauntlet the galleries were deserted, it was quite dark, and the pedagogue was conscious of having told all he knew--and that, too, in a manner calculated to impress his hearers with the belief that the cup of knowledge had been drained to the dregs and there was no more to know. Since that evening I have written out as much of the "talk" as I could recall, and with many additions have made up these pages.

I am quite positive of making no misstatement in saying that the young people referred to are representative of a very large class of intelligent Americans. Of those who visit the galleries during the art season not one in ten is able to tell a good picture from a bad one. They neither know how nor what to look at nor have they any standard of

judgment except that of their own individual fancy, which is oftener wrong than right. To prove the prevailing ignorance of painting among our (in other respects) educated people one has only to listen to the comments of visitors in a picture gallery, or to examine the pictures at our annual exhibitions which are early favored by having the card "Sold" placed in the frame. Even those who know their Véron, their Lötze, and their Ruskin—those familiar with every history and theory of the fine arts—are often no judges of the paintings themselves. Neither books nor theories nor lectures make the eye of the connoisseur. Studying the canvas—not one, but thousands of them—can alone give practical knowledge, accurate judgment, and good taste.

This may be applied even against this little volume. It is not designed as a complete guide to the fine arts, nor as a short cut to knowledge, and is put forth in all modesty of spirit however dictatorial or positive its lan-

guage may seem. Its main endeavor is to point out some general rules of art which may be practically applied in the gallery. That it has shortcomings cannot be denied, and that the subject itself is full of inconsistencies and hard to deal with is partially evidenced by the fact that no one has heretofore had the hardihood to attempt it.

It may be that these pages will be a hint or a suggestion to those better able to handle the theme than I am; and surely in a country like America, where so little is known of art among the masses, there should be a place for such literature as this.

JOHN C. VAN DYKE.

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HOW TO JUDGE OF A PICTURE.

CHAPTER I.

COLOR AND HARMONY.

In looking at a picture the first question we should ask ourselves is regarding the material, or technical, features of it; is it well executed?

This is a consideration that forces itself upon us in examining any art. The musician who knows not pitch, scale, and fingering will scarcely be able to interpret Wagnerian passion; the poet who knows not grammar and rhythm will not move us to tears by flights of sublimity or depths of pathos; and the painter who knows not how to draw, model, color, and, in short, *paint* will never excite our emotions by dramatic effect or poetic feeling. If none of them knows the language of his art it is quite useless to inquire further what he may have to say. That which is said is undoubtedly the higher and the nobler aim of art, but it is attained only through the manner of saying; and if our artist stammer over

his alphabet how shall he tell us of great truths and beauties, or reveal to us his power of imagination? It is necessary, then, that one who addresses us should be technically skilled in order to command our attention to his ideas; and it is necessary for us that we examine this technical side of art first.

Should we begin the examination rightly it would be by taking up the skeleton, the foundation of painting—drawing; but I am aware that you are somewhat like the art-students in the leagues and studios. You wish to get into painting at once, and handle a brush full of color before you know how to draw a line with a pencil. Good; let us begin at the ending and work backward. Thus we will plunge into painting at once and without preliminaries.

The two leading features of painting are form and color, and, as distinguished from the other fine arts, principally color. Upon entering a public gallery this latter feature will likely be the first to catch your notice, since the eye is naturally very susceptible to color. If your art education has been neglected (and I might say that the education of the most of us who have been born in America has been neglected in that respect) you will undoubtedly look down the long rows of pictures and the gayest colored canvas there will attract your attention, very much as in the autumn

woods you look about and center admiration on the most scarlet maple in sight. The fancy for things gaudy is quite characteristic of the Americans. Our immediate predecessor, the noble red man, has it strongly developed. Nothing delights the Indian soul quite so much as a frescoing of crude war-paint and a red blanket. His nature revels in anything flashy, and the same gaudy effects that please him please in a less degree those of higher intelligence. The taste is primitive, and very natural, but not at all artistic or well-founded. Natural likings give place to those of acquirement which are stronger, better, and more enduring. This is one of the differences between nature and art, and we shall have to note and emphasize many of them before we have finished with our subject; so we may as well begin by saying that nature is one thing, and art is another thing, and that if they were placed one at the North Pole and one at the South Pole they could not be further apart, and if they were both placed on the imaginary line of the Equator they could not be closer together—a seeming contradiction which we shall explain anon.

It is my purpose to point out what I deem to be false and crude in art, as well as to indicate what is good; so that the first caution I may offer regarding color is: Beware of your natural taste; beware of bright pictures, for they are gen-

erally bad. You will understand me now not as saying that *every* bright picture is bad. On the contrary, some of the greatest masterpieces, especially among the Venetians and the modern Spaniards, are highly keyed in color and brilliant in effect. The caution is used only regarding the great majority of pictures, and is to be taken with its exceptions. In fact, throughout these talks almost every thing I shall say will be subject to exceptions, and if I attempt to lay down a rule you will understand it as a general one only. I say, then, in a general way: Beware of the gaudy pictures, for they are bad. You ask if bright colors, such for instance as those of an autumnal wood, are not natural and harmonious without gaudiness, and I answer, "Yes;" but there are many things in nature beneath the artist's notice, and there are many things quite beyond his powers of realization. To the latter class belong mountain ranges, cataracts like Niagara, mountain lake views, and highly colored landscapes. The attempted portrayals end in success not once in a hundred times. The number of painters who have lived runs up into the thousands, and many of them good painters; but you may count on your two hands those who have been "colorists." Titian, Tintoret, Paul Veronese, Rubens, Velasquez, Delacroix —you may add perhaps a few more, like Rembrandt, Fortuny, and Regnault, who had more the

color instinct than its strong development; but the list is nearly complete. Lest you misunderstand, let me say at once that "color" does not mean brightness alone; and that a "colorist" is not one who deals in flaming colors with the recklessness of a crazy-quilt maker, but one who justly regards the relationship, the qualities, and the suitableness of his colors one to another, whether they be in shadow, half-tint, or bright light.

Now, to unite these features and produce color-harmony is one of the most difficult things in all painting, and just because it is difficult of accomplishment almost every youthful painter attempts it. Youth is ever ready to scale the walls of the "brightest heaven of invention" where age is content to look in at the door. The college sophomore uses sentiment freely, the aged writer is afraid of it. For some years the young artist fancies himself a "born colorist," very much as your stage-struck youth imagines himself a tragedian. Nothing will answer but that both must have their day of trial, and learn wisdom by experience rather than by precept. After a time each grows weary of failure, and awakes suddenly to the conclusion that he has mistaken his calling. The one is perhaps a good draughtsman, and excels in low tones; the other discovers that he can be respectable, at least, in comedy. When the idea that he is a "born colorist" begins to grow mightily less in

the artist's mind he looks about him to see what those have done who are not colorists—those who have tried and failed before him. He then discovers that they continue to use colors, but not bright ones or those high in key; he finds out that colors regarded as antagonistic to one another are less antagonistic and less conspicuous if put in in half-tint than in full light; that "toned-down," "washed-out," and "faded" colors are easier to harmonize than the fresher and purer ones. Instead of harmony he now begins to talk about "tone," and where formerly he thought to win by positive affirmation he now makes his color negative or neutral, and strives that it shall not offend. Vivid hues are things he avoids. The well-blended, low-toned Oriental rug becomes his pattern of color-harmony, and if he is a landscape painter he seldom now essays the scarlet and yellow foliage, the golden haze and deep-flushed skies of October. Failure after failure has taught him the comparative uselessness of the attempt, and so he waits a month or six weeks until overhead drift dull gray clouds, and the sunlight is white instead of gold; until the trees are bare, and underfoot is barren ground and the grass is faded with frost and rains. Then, when nature seems shrouded in a garb of melancholy, he paints his landscape and tries to make it express the spirit of the scene before him. It is generally marked by a somber-

ness or perhaps absence of color, and excels by virtue of other features—such as perspective, atmospheric qualities, gray tone, or poetic feeling.

You will now see why the caution regarding bright pictures was offered. They are generally the work of young painters who have yet to learn that they are not divinely gifted with an eye for color, or perhaps the work of those who never will learn their shortcomings in that line. Nine times out of ten, if not amateurish, they are rankly bad. The instances you may cite of Gérôme's "Tulip Folly"* and Vibert's scarlet-robed cardinals are simply cases in hand to prove my assertion. Gérôme is in many respects an excellent artist, and it weighs not heavily against him that he is no colorist, though his lack of self-knowledge on that point spoils many of his pictures. None of the great Florentines, Leonardo, Michael Angelo, or Raphael, knew very much about color. They were great artists, draughtsmen, poets, thinkers, but their color was crude and their painting thin and flat as compared with that of Titian, Rubens, or Velasquez. If *they* were faulty in color it need not be surprising to us that the Gérômes, the Viberts, and the Meyer von Bremens furnish good examples of badness in this line.

Do not be led astray, then, by glare or glitter, or tawdry effects, but in the gallery of pictures follow

* Sold in the Morgan Collection.

the same good judgment you perhaps display in daily life. If we see one on the street dressed in bright stuffs, with much tinsel, ribbons, and jewelry about her, we say to ourselves that she has bad taste, or perhaps that she is "loud;" but if after her appears one dressed in well-matched goods, with hat, gloves, and ornaments to correspond, the whole inconspicuous yet uniform, we talk about "style" and "keeping." By all means pass over the "loud" and the extravagant wherever they are met with, and center attention on the modest products of good taste. Look to the grays and browns; the low-toned and half-tinted pictures—look at them not once only, but several times, for there is likely to be something in them that you do not see at first glance. Of course you will understand that there may be nothing whatever in them, and that they may be bad in spite of inoffensive grays and browns; but that they are not repellent with contradictory colors is to their advantage to start with. This small picture, with its silver sky and green-sedged river, you have just passed over,* is a fine example of Daubigny, than whom, in his peculiar line, a better painter never lived. There were no flaring reds nor blues nor scarlets nor purples in it, and you thought it was not much of a picture; but now stop and look at it closer. Do you not see that the ab-

* "On the Seine," Morgan Collection.

sence of high color pleases by negation, and gives you an opportunity to see other beauties? First, it is good in tone, or possesses a uniformity of tint that is refreshing to the eye; second, it is good in atmosphere—something you doubtless never thought could be expressed with a paint-brush; third, it is well composed, and a landscape requires composition as well as a figure piece; fourth, its "values" are well maintained, its qualities good, and its poetic feeling excellent. These latter terms I shall explain further on.

In the same way you would be likely to pass over a gathering tempest by Courbet, simply because it is not bright, when the atmosphere may be laden with the hush of the storm, and the mutterings of the thunder may be almost heard in the heavy clouds. If you are wise you will not turn away from the gray and brown landscapes of Corot, Rousseau, Troyon, and Diaz to admire the theatrical horrors of the Dusseldorf school*—the gigantic mountains with pink-glowing peaks, the enormous plains with flaming sunlight darted through rolling clouds; nor the stupendous panoramic productions of our own Hudson River-Rocky Mountain school—the bird's-eye views of gorges, valleys, rivers, and oceans flashing with many colors. These latter may appear the more

* A modern German school, the prestige of which is somewhat impaired at the present day.

wonderful and startling at first; but the second time you see them you will find your wonder somewhat abated; and the third time you will begin to see through the glitter to the tinsel behind them. By all means choose the quieter, more subdued pieces —those that do not rack us like a cataract, but rather soothe us with the gentle murmur of the woodland brook. They will grow and improve with acquaintanceship, and in them we shall find the true poetry of the commonplace, the most satisfactory and sympathetic of all.

The same rule of color that guides you in pictures of landscape should guide you also in marines, still-life, and figure compositions. The emerald greens of the ocean twisted and contorted into the thousand fantastic shapes of the maelstrom, the rolling clouds laced with the lightning's streak, the laboring ship in the storm with flying colors, and the floating red buoy with the artist's name upon it are not likely to make up so good a picture as the dull sky and water of some lowland or harbor where the fog rolls in by night and the smoke from a hundred factories rolls out by day.

In still-life pieces it is much the fashion among artists nowadays to paint tables, vases, bronzes, cabinets, jewels, glass—bric-a-brac, in short—and this is well enough so far as it goes, if the pieces be well painted; but even here bright colors should not deceive you, though subjects like these are often

chosen for their color alone. A dead fish painted by Vollon* may be worth more as a work of art than any dozen of the brilliant canvases of Second Empire furniture which prove so wonderfully attractive to many of our society women.

Again, in figures, you would better not be borne away by the gladiatorial scenes and pageants of old Rome, the flash of jeweled swords and helmets, the gorgeousness of robes, the sheen of silks and fabrics, and the heroic pose of people who are trying their best to represent characters in history. These people of Roybet, with their washed-out court velvets and dull-brown costumes, who are holding a musical concert ;† Dannat's quartet singing in a Spanish cabaret,‡ with but a speck of color shining here and there upon dark ground; or Munkacsy's "Studio Interior," with the painter sitting on a table examining, with his wife, a canvas on the easel, the whole brushed in with dull color, are likely to be much better. There is a method in all these low tones, and you would better try to find the key to it. Roybet, Dannat, and Munkacsy knew the color-gamut when the pictures I have instanced were painted—knew it very thoroughly —and their choice of half-tint was not the result of ignorance nor of chance, but of design.

* In the Luxembourg, Paris.

† In the Vanderbilt Gallery, New York.

‡ Metropolitan Museum, New York.

Next to the low-toned pictures you should consider the ones that are marked by depth and richness of coloring, because these again are more numerous and usually of a better quality than those pitched in high keys. Draw the line of distinction sharply and clearly between raw, unrefined coloring, such as characterizes the cheap American calicoes and ginghams, and rich warm coloring, such as characterizes the silks and stuffs of the Orient. The one is flaring and devoid of taste, the other has refinement and elegance. Beware of the calico-colored pictures! The art-world is full of them. They are produced by some of our older American artists, and may be seen by the score any spring at the National Academy of Design; the English artists of the Holman Hunt stamp turn them out in quantity for the admiration of Royal Academy *habitués;* and the followers of Dusseldorf, from the pictures they paint, would seem to have been born in a brimstone atmosphere under a brick-red sun. Instead of wasting time on these crude products, look to the pictures with deep tones of color—the dark browns, greens, and maroons. This picture by Millet of the woman "Gathering Beans"* will illustrate my meaning. The color is not conspicuous, yet what appears is of a rich, substantial quality. This is true of almost all Millet's paint-

* Morgan Collection.

ings, and in fact of the whole school known to-day as the Fontainebleau-Barbizon school, to which he belonged. The wood interiors of Diaz, with their luminous browns, greens, and blues; the cattle of Troyon, with patches upon them possessed of a coloring almost as deep as mahogany; and the marines of Dupré, with a bluish green depth in the sea and an old wine quality in the shadowed sails of the boats, will any of them exemplify richness of coloring. The pictures of Decamps and Marilhat, remarkable for a certain Oriental lusciousness illumined by warm light, are again good instances; and in many pictures of the old masters which have been mellowed by time, especially in those of Titian and Rembrandt, the reds now glow like melted garnets and the yellows gleam pure gold.

It is worth while, then, to give more attention to low-toned, deep-toned, and rich-toned pictures than to those pitched in high keys; yet among the latter you will very often find excellent work. And when high color is harmonious and has richness at the same time it is undoubtedly the acme of art in that respect. The work of the modern school, known as the Spanish-Roman, which includes Fortuny, Zamaçois, Madrazo, Boldini, Rico, Villegas, and others, is remarkable for its high keys of color handled effectively and harmoniously. How you shall recognize the good

from the bad among these pictures I cannot tell you. Harmony of color is a much-talked-about and a much-misunderstood subject, and, so far, what has been written about it is little more than the expression of individual opinion corresponding to individual like or dislike. Of course these opinions differ widely. Two people will hardly ever agree about the color of a picture, one being pleased with it and the other displeased, one thinking it harmonious, the other declaring that each tint in it quarrels with its neighbor.

The color-theories are innumerable, but there are two generally prevailing among artists, who use them quite unconsciously and doubtless think they follow only a blind artistic instinct. The first is that harmony is produced by the blending of closely related colors, such as red, orange, yellow; the second, that it is produced by the contrast of opposite or complementary colors* softened, toned down, and run together, such as green and red, yellow and blue.† A very simple

* Two colors are said to be complementary to each other when their union produces white. Thus orange is the complementary color of pure blue, because the two mixed together produce white.

† Couture, an artist of note, thus sums up the making of harmony: "The base first of all; then the accord of contraries; red-green, yellow-blue; the dominant light bright and central; the somber values increasing toward the extremities."—*Conversations on Art.*

and practical classification of color is made by dividing it into two groups—warm and cold; the warm colors being the reds, orange, and yellows, and the cold ones the blues, greens, and violets. You will understand the tones to be respectively warm or cold by association in our minds, and by their effect upon our senses. Thus the reds, scarlets, and golds belong to a landscape of the tropics, or to the desert, while the blues and dark greens are appropriate to the colder climes. In a similar manner, the blue room of a house seems cool, and well fitted for summer weather, while the red room is quite the reverse. I believe it to be a generally accepted theory that harmony is produced by the predominance of warm colors relieved by cold ones, or cold colors relieved by warm ones. Should I venture an opinion of my own it might be quite different from this; but theories of color, however interesting they may be in the abstract, will not help you much in the gallery, for no rule, be it ever so well founded, will be without many brilliant and startling exceptions.

There is only one true way to acquire an art-knowledge of harmony, and that is to study the works of the great colorists with a determination to understand and appreciate them. This will educate the eye (practically speaking), and teach you to note many beauties you do not see at first glance. It is said that the people of India are

able to perceive three hundred different shades of color not perceptible to European eyes, and it cannot be doubted that their years of association with varied hues has trained them to this keenness of vision. The detection of beauty in color is not a thing that can be argued or learned from a book. As the handler of silks educates the sense of touch, and the musician and the poet the sense of hearing, so the artist develops the sense of sight without rule or reason, and oftentimes quite unconsciously. And if we would comprehend their arts we must study them in a not dissimilar manner. By familiarity and association with harmony we finally grow to appreciate it instinctively, and we will often note its presence in pictures where the position and the relation of colors are quite contrary to our fondest theories.

Aside from this special knowledge of experience that comes only with years, it is well enough to apply the good taste which we may display in the affairs of every-day life. That which is distasteful to the color-sense in reality should not be treated with high and lofty consideration simply because it is reproduced on canvas. Sobriety, "good keeping," and "style" are as apparent in art as in the fashion-plate, and did we study them in the former with one half the assiduity we do in the latter we should have no trouble in recognizing their presence.

CHAPTER II.

TONE AND GRADATION.

TONE is a word often used out of place as synonymous with harmony, but you will not so confuse the terms, for they are quite distinct in meaning. Harmony is the relation of color-qualities ; tone the relation of color-quantities. To be sure, they have much to do with one another, and it is very doubtful if tone may be produced without harmony, or harmony without tone. The distinction between them may be made plainer, perhaps, by saying that harmony has more particularly to do with the problem of whether one color is congenial or well suited to another, while tone involves the grades of different colors used and their *proportionate* relationships to one another.

If you have had little experience among pictures (and I am addressing only the inexperienced) tone will be something of which you have heard much and seen but little ; that is to say, you may have seen it but have not recognized it. Doubtless you would notice its absence quicker than its presence, very much as you would detect a superfluous foot or a false rhyme in a line of poetry quicker than

the rhythm of the whole poem. Its necessity in good painting is quite absolute, for a picture out of tone would be almost equivalent to an orchestra out of key, though the discord would not be quite so easy to detect. The eye is almost as sensitive an organ as the ear, and it is to please the eye, and through it to appeal to the emotions, that pictures with harmonious coloring and tone are painted.

Tone requires the accord of all the notes of the color-gamut with some leading color, precisely as in music all the notes are pitched in a common key to which they pay allegiance. The striking of a note out of key produces discord in both cases. You will understand that in full light the different colors of a piece of tapestry, for instance, must be equal in brightness or somberness, to produce tone; but you will also understand that the same tapestry, when thrown in a heap on the floor, takes upon itself different degrees or gradations of light. Parts of it appear in full color, parts in half-tint, and parts in shadow. So tone is of a simple nature when in uniform light, and requires only a resemblance in quantity of tint; but it is of a compound nature when it involves different lights or shadows, and then requires gradations of tint from the predominant or highest color.

Simple tone is often seen in Oriental rugs where they have been worn, or so handled that one color

is as much faded as another, and in this condition we hear them spoken of as "good in tone." Many of the pictures of the old masters which were originally bad pieces of color have become "toned down" through the mellowing effect of time and varnish, and in the case of colorists like Titian the warmth, richness, and general tone of the whole are very fine. The reverse of tone may be instanced in the new American rug, with its flaring reds and blues of all shades and degrees of intensity, and perhaps more strikingly in the "Tulip Folly" of Gérôme, "The Missionary's Story" of Vibert,* or the sheep pictures of Verboeckhoven, all of which you will probably admire at first sight.

The intensity of color, whether it be bright or somber, is immaterial provided the general quantity of it be maintained throughout the whole. It makes little difference whether the scene represents a dingy factory town or a Madrid square at carnival time. For tone is dependent upon proportion and gradation, and not upon depth or height. A harbor scene on a smoky, foggy day, when all things blend into a predominant gray, or a dull landscape in March, are good examples of low tone; while an autumn scene, when the leaves are in the scarlet and yellow, may instance the reverse. In the one case the grays prevail throughout the scene, in the other the reds and yellows.

* Morgan Collection.

In a picture the intensity of each note may be given true to nature, but the representation is made true to nature as she *appears to the artist*, not as she is in reality; and, therefore, the colors are graded off on all sides from a central light into lower notes. For nature appears to us as a depth, illumined by a central light, and surrounded by shadows increasing in density with the increase of distance. This may be instanced by a sunset effect. The sun itself is dominant and central; around it is an aureole of light; further removed come the reflections from the clouds; beyond them vapory colors; and so on, lessening in intensity as they radiate, until at last color and light slip off into shadow. The same effect of central light and its gradations is apparent in any object or collection of objects in nature, no matter how small they may be. You have often noticed the play of light and color on an iridescent vase, the position of it always changing as you change. This forms what may be called the high light of the vase, and from it on all sides begin the gradations toward shadow. This high light appears on a common water-glass quite as strongly as on the vase, but you do not notice it because the light is not colored, but purely white. And so, in a less noticeable degree, it appears in all things—a hand, a human face, a building, a city, a landscape. In the case of the autumn landscape if we look at it through a pict-

ure-frame or a window-sash, we shall find the highest light and color directly before us, and these, owing to point of view, atmosphere, and distance, decrease toward the sides in perfect ratio.

Couture describes gradation so well, in speaking of Correggio's picture of "Antiope," in the Louvre, that you will pardon my quoting it: "The woman enveloped in a panther-skin is as bright as a flame. The soft red tone forms the first halo, then the light-blue draperies with a slight greenish tint form the second halo. The satyr has a value a few degrees below that of the draperies, making it the third halo. When the bouquet is thus formed Correggio surrounds it with beautiful dark leaves shading toward the extremities of the canvas. These gradations are so well observed that if you put the picture at so great a distance that you cannot see the figures you will still have the effect of light."* This is again shown, perhaps even stronger, in Correggio's "La Notte" at Dresden, showing the Adoration of the Shepherds at the cradle of Christ. All the light proceeds from the Child, and radiates toward darkness at the sides and corners.

You will of course understand that these are extreme instances, given in order to call attention to gradation of color and light. It is not so apparent in the great majority of pictures, and indeed there

**Conversations on Art.*

are many in which you will not notice it at all. We do not often meet with pictures looking as though there were a tunnel of light in the center of them and darkness on all sides; yet nevertheless this is the principle, though the practice is not so violent. The portraits of the ancients, in which the features of the face come peering out of bitumen darkness as though the subject were lost in the labyrinths of a coal mine and struggling to find his way out by the light of a lucifer match, are true enough to art, but purposely exaggerated in the lights and shades, in order to gain strength and effect. Rembrandt and his school painted in this way most successfully, but those who have tried to repeat their successes have not fared so well.

In trying to judge of tone and gradation in a picture, then, you would better look, first, for the vantage point of light, or that point where the light is the brightest. This should be near the center, and the bright color should usually be the key-note of the picture. Try this note upon your eye, very much as you do a note of music upon your ear. Get the pitch or tone in that way, and then try the other notes to see if they are in proper keeping with it in a descending scale. Some practice will enable you to detect discord in either case. In landscapes where there is much perspective and atmospheric effect a lack of positive gradation

would be bad; even in figure-pieces, still-life, or *genre* paintings it is necessary, and any picture in which the brightness or light placed at the sides or corners equals or excels the color or light of the center, may, as a general rule, be set down as poor work.

Almost any of Corot's landscapes will answer as an illustration of good tone and gradation. In this "Lake Nemi," * for instance, the yellowish light will be found central and predominant, and its piercing illuminating power gradually grows less, until in the foreground and at the sides it fades off into patches of dull light or somber shadows. You may trace the same effect in the Seine and Marne landscapes of Daubigny, in Millet's peasant figures, in Lerolle's "Organ Rehearsal;" † and you will note other illustrations pitched in higher keys in the horses of Fromentin, the Venetian pieces of Ziem and Bunce, and the court interiors of Decamps (better still in his "Turkish Patrol," now at the Metropolitan Museum). Now turn from these, and examine the "Tulip Folly" of Gérôme, and you will very soon see the difference, to the advantage of the first-named painters. The tulip-beds make a crazy quilt of the picture, and the color is not only out of all harmony, but it is likewise out of all tone.

* Morgan Collection. † Metropolitan Museum.

From what I have said I would not have you put me down as thinking Gérôme a bad painter. On the contrary, he is a very good one, and possessed of many excellent qualities, but among them he does not always number color and tone. Perfection is not found among artists any more than among doctors or lawyers. The good fairies may combine at the artist's birth to give him many excellences, but the evil fairy is ever at hand to mix in a vice with the virtues. Fromentin and Decamps, whom I have just cited as good in tone, both lacked in drawing—the very thing in which Gérôme is strong. We must admire genius for what it succeeds in doing, and not for what it fails to do; and a painter who does but one thing well is nevertheless entitled to consideration.

CHAPTER III.

LIGHT AND SHADE.

LIGHT and shade independent of color, or what is often called chiaroscura, is a something with which you are possibly familiar in a certain way, but a few illustrations of it may not be out of place here. For there is more to it than a man walking down the street with his shadow following him on the sidewalk, or the patch of dark green under the maple-tree on the lawn.

In viewing surrounding objects we too often see them only in silhouette or outline. A person's face with which we are familiar is seen and recognized by its features; we do not see or take into account the lights or shades upon it, notwithstanding there is a ridge of light running down the forehead, nose, and chin (if the face be turned toward us), just as Rembrandt has painted it again and again. A tree in an orchard looks to us to be cast in flat mass against the sky, to have an irregular hard outline like that of the apple-tree in the spelling book of our youth; but if we blur the outlines by partially closing our eyes, and then look, not for line or color, but for patches of light and shade,

we shall find them scattered quite conspicuously throughout the foliage. Wherever a hollow space is left by the branches there will be deep shadow, and wherever the branches extend far out beyond the others there will be bright light. The arm of a mahogany chair may seem to have told you its whole history at first glance; but just for curiosity look at it again. Half close your eyes, and when looking for light and shadows always do this, and now you see something you had not noticed before. The polished surface reflects like a mirror and upon it are patches of light as bright as a sheet of white paper. You rather doubt that last assertion, I know, but possibly you do not yet realize how bright sunlight and its reflection really are. Mr. Ruskin says that the deep blue sky at noonday is whiter than any piece of paper made, and upon a question of nature Mr. Ruskin is a very good authority. Hold up against the sky the whitest substance you can find and see how dark the latter will grow by comparison.

There is nothing in nature, from a pebble to a mountain and from a cat to a king, that does not possess to the artist's eye its proportions of light and shade. As school-children we gathered some idea of the appearance of the world in globe when it is night on our part of it. We can still remember the picture of the globe half in light and half in shade, and we can remember the experiment of

using a lamp for a sun. In a less degree, and more modulated by diversities of light and shade, appears every object in nature when there is light in the heavens. There is always a point of high light and an opposite point of deep shadow, and in art it is the maintenance of the just relations between the light and the shade that gives to objects that rounded and real appearance which they hold in nature.

Chiaroscura, or light and shade, then, may be said to be the art-means whereby objects are cast in relief upon flat surface and made to assume the appearance of reality. Of course, it is of the very first importance, and without it painting would only be an outline filled in with color, like the Egyptian wall pictures. In fact, these latter fully illustrate the importance of chiaroscura by its absence. The Egyptian battle-pieces show no shadows; the Egyptian landscapes show no lights. The painters in the days of the Pharaohs did not know about light and shade, or at least never made practical use of it to any extent. They saw the outline of form only, and the painting of this without relief gave to their work that childish, unnatural look which characterizes it.

In modern times there is nothing so extreme as the lack of light and shade, yet there are nevertheless many features of chiaroscura disregarded or overlooked by our artists. The foreground of

a picture, for instance, is very often meaningless rubbish dragged in to fill up, simply because it is not broken with variations and inequalities of light, as every foreground appears in nature. In landscape there is never a patch so large as one's hand of the same color or shade, unless it be sky or water, yet in pictures you will often see whole fields or forests well enough set forth in outline but nearly all of the same shade or tint. Our young men who fancy impressionism, and who like to paint what they call "impressions," are in the main correct in their handling of light and shade, though often extreme. Their masses of light and of shade, while correct enough in quantity, lack the diversity in quality which appears in nature. Surrounding features that reflect or break reflections produce a thousand different phases and complications of chiaroscura which the artist must study and comprehend, otherwise there will always be something lacking in his work. Where nature is departed from by not being well understood, and the true relation of every part of a picture to the high light is disregarded, the effect of giving the canvas an unpleasantly hard expression—a mechanical appearance characteristic of the cheap oil-painting peddled on the street corner—is noticeable at once.

All objects in a picture, then, require to be rounded out and placed in proper relation by

giving to each a due proportion of light and shade. The intensity of the light is immaterial provided it is continuous, and extends proportionately throughout the scene. It makes no difference whether a face be painted in the studio or in open sunlight if the lights on the nose, chin, and forehead are in proportion to the shadows on the sides of the face and neck. There never was a sunlight painted that remotely approximated the light of the sun's rays; and so there never was a moonlight scene on canvas that ever came within a hundred degrees of reaching the density of shadows cast at night. But this is of little consequence provided the proportionate relationship between the lights and shades is kept up. The artist is like the singer: he may not reach such high or low notes so he transposes the key yet retains the relationship. The necessity of this relationship being maintained, no matter what the key, is absolute.

Though the intensity of light may be immaterial provided the shadows are in proportion, yet the *quantity* of light, if it exceed the quantity of shade, will make a garish show upon the canvas. I might mention a celebrated picture at the Metropolitan Museum in New York that instances this shortcoming very forcibly—Meissonier's "Friedland—1807." In this canvas it would be hard to say where shadow was needed, for each object has

its proper shading; but there is a lack of shadow masses (a fault of composition) to relieve the garishness of the lights. Decamps and Fromentin painted the glaring tropical sunlight, but they made no mistake about balancing it with tropical shadows; and Corot, with all his love of light, never failed to relieve it with quantities of shade. Leonardo, Correggio, Rembrandt, and Murillo cannot be said to have used too much shade, because they always offset it by high lights in strong contrast. The effects they produced may be called "forced" effects, but they are not the less brilliant.

In order to produce the best art it is necessary that the one point from which the light comes should be maintained throughout the whole canvas. To paint one half of a tree in the morning, when the sun is in the east, and another half in the afternoon, when the sun is in the west, would seem to be as poor art as the painting of part of a figure in the studio and part in the open air. Consistency and proportion should rule in a canvas, though it may as well be admitted that in the works of some of the best of artists these qualities are often disregarded. Diaz, for instance, in his finest Fontainebleau landscapes, seems to have a dozen suns in the sky from the way the contradictory light falls; and Fromentin and Decamps often contorted light to suit a special purpose, very much

as Michael Angelo did the drawing of the human figure. But we cannot consider these shortcomings as virtues, however effective artifices they may have proved in strong hands. They do not form suitable rules for people of less talent to follow, and I should say, despite brilliant exceptions, that in examining pictures it would better be looked to, first, that every thing, no matter how small it may be, has its due proportion of light and shade; second, that there be one point of the compass from which the light comes; third, that there be a center of light in the picture itself, from which all the other lights radiate and decrease until they are lost in color or shadow.

This third point needs little explanation, for the illustrations used to exemplify gradation in tone and color will apply to light as well; and moreover I have set forth this theory of light elsewhere.* There must be a central and predominant light, as there is a central and predominant color, and from this there is a gradation toward the sides of the picture, ending in shadow or deep color tones. The sun with its different halos, or a lighted lamp in a room, are extreme cases pointing to the principle. The question of whether the central light is always present in nature need not obtrude itself here. It is necessary that it should be so in art. There must be one center of interest

* *Principles of Art.* Fords, Howard & Hulbert, New York.

marked by light, or bright color (which is in effect the same thing), to which the eye will be inevitably drawn; and we shall see hereafter that the maintenance of this central light by the degradation of all lesser lights is not only good art, but absolutely indispensable to the production of strong work. Not a few of the great painters—Correggio, Rembrandt, Corot, and Decamps—depended so much upon the forcible effects of light as to be known in the art world as luminarists, in contradistinction to colorists. Their art is perhaps the best illustration I can offer of the manner in which it should be handled.

A passing word and a caution regarding the technical way in which light is painted. The French and Spanish artists paint it superbly, especially men like Fortuny, Stevens, Rico, Boldini; that is, they paint it as it is—fresh and bright, not misty and hazy with dust. The English, as a rule, do not paint it well, because they fail to give it sufficient relief, and their handling is "dry" and hard. The Germans, especially those of Dusseldorf pupilage, paint it badly in its effect on objects. To produce reflected light upon a piece of furniture they throw a scumbling of white over the object, which gives the effect of flour being sprinkled upon it; to produce light upon the hands or face they are painted like lumps of dough; to produce sunlight on a tree-trunk the trunk is beau-

tifully frescoed with a mixture of white and chrome-yellow. All this is poor work, which you will soon come to recognize as such.

Still another word regarding shadows. You will often see among the paintings of to-day (by these same French and Spanish painters) representations of gardens, lawns, meadows, or streets in full sunlight. You will perhaps be startled by the hard, almost black, shadows cast by the various objects in the landscape, and will be inclined to look upon them as exaggerations. You may hear some artist or critic speak of them as "forced" for the sake of contrast; but before you believe the accusation make a few observations on your own account. Place your finger over a sheet of paper and compare the shadow cast with the finger casting it. You will find the shadow much the darker. Look at a person's face and you will find the shadows under the chin much darker than the chin itself. Compare a shadow on the sidewalk with the object producing it, whether it be a person, a horse, or a building, and you will again find the shadow the darker. From this you can formulate the general rule, subject, however, to some exceptions, that in full sunshine the shadows are darker than the objects casting them; and if you will apply this rule to the landscapes we have instanced you will not find the shadows "forced" or overdone in any way, but, on the contrary, so natural that we do not

recognize their truth at first. Again, objects may be rounded off or blurred by atmosphere, but their shadows are not so easily affected. They are hard, sharp in outline, and flat. It will be remembered that they appear so only in full light, for every one knows that when the sun goes behind a cloud the shadows, so far as the casual observer notices, disappear.

CHAPTER IV.

PERSPECTIVE AND ATMOSPHERE.

PERSPECTIVE is a feature of painting which we are all supposed to know something about. It is the first thing sought after by the great majority of picture viewers, who are determined to find it even if they have to look for it through tin tubes, rolls of paper, or half-clenched hands; but unfortunately it is not always intelligently discerned. Perspective is not distance alone, and a canvas may be able to show great stretches of land or water receding miles away toward the horizon without being good in perspective in the full sense of the word.

If we stand on the rear car of a railway train we see the parallel rails of the track behind us apparently coming together in the distance. The telegraph poles ranged along the side of the road do likewise. The road-bed runs up to the sky, the sky runs down to the road-bed. There is a converging of all objects toward the center, and the whole scene resembles a funnel, the small end of which is the distant union of tracks, poles, earth, and sky. A glance down a long street will

show a similar effect. Houses, street, and sky seem to run together into one distant point of view. The old method of studying perspective recommended by the encyclopedias, of looking at a landscape through a pane of glass and imagining that the scene is really painted on the glass, is but another way of attaining the same result. All this is perspective, but only one feature of it—linear perspective. It is caused by the apparent degradation in the size of objects and their grouping as the distance increases. Its effect may be produced on canvas or paper quite easily by even the unskillful, and it is in fact one of the primary accomplishments of the would-be artist.

Perspective in a general way is understood by all, and its existence recognized in pictures so far as the graded diminution of objects is concerned. But there is another feature which we do not always consider, namely, the indistinctness and blurring of lines which increase in proportion with the diminution of size. We may be able to recognize the face of a friend a few yards away from us; at a hundred yards we see the features of the face, but not clearly enough for recognition; at half a mile we see but three parts of the figure, the head, the body, and the legs; and when a mile from us our friend is but a patch or spot of color on the landscape, scarcely recognizable from a stump or an animal. It is the gradual dissipation

of line that we sometimes fail to take into account, and some of the less skilled of the artists seem not wiser than ourselves in this respect. The tendency of the artist is not to paint the man as he *appears* in the landscape, but to paint him from memory as he knows him really to be. While the figure decreases in size it fails to fall away in distinctness, because the artist seeks by minute painting to render the same features at a distance as close by. This, of course, is an error. Instead of the distance being remote, the landscape looks as though it were made up of diminutive men, trees, and rocks placed side by side with others of larger proportions. The appearance of air or atmosphere is destroyed, and the whole scene looks unnatural —in fact, is so as we see nature. A tree on a far-away hillside will appear to us to have little or no outline or individuality; and the painting of it so that it may be recognized as an oak, a maple, or an elm is neither nature nor art. The tendency again is to paint, not the blurred tree that we see a mile away, but the actual tree that we know close at hand; to allow our memory to deceive our senses. Our knowledge of botanical truth blinds us to art truth. As objects recede they fade in distinctness, until at last lost altogether.

There is still another feature of perspective which calls for quite as serious attention from the painter as either of the ones mentioned. This is the changed

appearance of color and light and shade seen at a distance. The change is caused by the air being filled with countless particles of matter, which, reflecting and transmitting certain waves of color, affect the coloring of distant objects. Atmosphere must be looked upon as a kind of transparent fog. In the case of the fog the air is filled with drops of moisture; in sunshine it is filled with minute particles of dust or similar substances. Both of these are interruptions to sight, the former more so than the latter, of course, and both must be allowed for if we would get the appearance of things upon canvas.

Too often, however, we allow ourselves to be deceived by not believing the impression of our eyes; and where people, like the Impressionists,* do trust their eyes, and paint effects in violet, blue, and green, we know with what shrieks of derision the great public receives the vision. To be sure, the Impressionists tell us extravagant things, but they also tell us truthful things, and I am not sure but that one is quite as hard to believe as the other, especially when both are new to us. The tree on the hillside which we have just instanced is known to be covered with green leaves, and with this knowledge our mind affects our sense of sight,

*A modern French school, founded by Edouard Manet, which attempts to realize "impressions" received from nature.

and instead of our eyes telling our intellect what the color of the tree appears to be, our intellect tells our eyes that it is green, and the latter are foolish enough to believe it. But if we partially close our eyes, and look for color alone, we shall find we have been deceived, for the tree does not appear green, but bluish-gray. In this case the intervening atmosphere makes it appear as though we were looking through a blue-gray glass, the reflections and breaks in the path of sunlight changing the colors and the lights. This change generally makes in landscape the dark distant objects appear lighter, and the light objects warmer in tint.

Aerial perspective, then, as distinguished from linear perspective, is the effect of atmosphere upon objects, lights, or colors in nature, and is produced by proportionate intensities or depressions of coloring and light. In effect it blurs the outlines and modulates the colors of objects, and its proper use results in sharp line being graded into rough form, and rough form finally disappearing into mere patches and blurs of color, as the distance increases.

I might point out many instances of where perspective of all kinds is poorly indicated; but perhaps it would be better to instance a case where it is well done, and I know of no better example than Corot offers. Look at his "Lake Nemi" again, and look now for the gradation of

objects, the changing of color, and the blurring of outline caused by distance, and you will find them. You think every thing is too much blurred; that those trees were put in with a palette knife, and then rubbed down with a towel before they were dry; and that the whole is not natural. And you are right. It is not nature, but rather the appearance of it only. We shall speak of this hereafter. In the meantime look at the face of your friend; keep your eyes fixed there, and then tell me how much you can see of her hands. Yes, I know you can see them because you know they are there; but *how much* of them do you see? and are they plainly outlined, or only blurs of flesh-color? If you were looking at a portrait of her you would look at the face as you are doing now, and if the hands were painted in the portrait as they appear to you they would be blurred—something I have no doubt you would quarrel with, just as you find fault with the feet and hands of Millet's peasantry because they are not "finely finished," as Bouguereau would have painted them. If you were looking at Corot's landscape as you should, your eyes would be fixed upon the center of light, and then those trees at the right which you think "too splashy," and which you fancy you could paint just as well yourself, would appear precisely as you would see them in nature, if looking at the center of light.

But of that more anon. At present we return to our theme of perspective; and since you are not fond of Corot we will try to instance other masters who excel in it. No; not Claude, nor Turner, nor Achenbach, nor Bierstadt, nor Richards. Those immense views of mountain, valley, plain, or shore are but one phase of perspective, that phase seen by looking through the large end of an opera-glass, namely, linear perspective. They may be true in point of drawing, but they are false in point of color and atmosphere, and these latter are quite as important as the former. Let us choose examples from artists who have aspired to less and accomplished more. Almost any of the pictures of De Nittis, who has painted the streets, squares, and bridges of Paris and London, will afford us illustrative material. The people who are hurrying along the boulevards on a wet day, the splashing horses, the balancing umbrellas, the falling rain, the heavy atmosphere, are all admirably set forth. And note the effect of this atmosphere upon the faces of the men and women. The first ones coming right out of the canvas are fully and clearly expressed; the next ones not quite so plainly; the next grow more pallid; and so on until in the background, growing still more indistinct, the forms and figures dimly pass like ghosts in shadow pantomime. This is not only

true of the people, but also of the horses, carriages, trees, houses, streets—in fact, every thing in the picture.

Decamps and Fromentin, in their Eastern pieces, street scenes, caravan groups, and desert views, have admirably rendered perspective and atmosphere. The "Italian Street" of the former artist, at present owned by M. Secretan of Paris, is a perfect *tour de force* in point of atmospheric effect. Daubigny, Troyon, Damoye, and Lepine, among the French landscapists, and some of our American artists, Inness, Murphy, Crane, and others who do not attempt to paint the whole earth on one canvas, but are content with a scrap of woodland or meadow, or a country road, are also good in this line. Jules Breton (especially in his "Evening at Finisterre"), Millet, Frère, Israels, Lerolle, and others among the figure-painters excel in it likewise; while Gérôme, Cabanel, and Bouguereau seem to have very little sympathy with atmosphere, and show perspective more by gradations of form than of color.

Before leaving this subject let me warn you against the rendering of atmosphere by scumbling the canvas with white, gray, or bluish-gray paint instead of producing the effect by gradations of line and tones of color. It is sometimes, I might say oftentimes, bad. To be sure, there are some scenes that require just such work. In

great distances, even in clear weather, the air appears blue, and not only makes the distant mountains appear bluish-gray, but is blue of itself. Again, the mellow haze of Indian summer, the heaviness of a cloudy day, mists, fogs, twilights, all are produced not alone by gradations of form and color but by scumblings; yet for all that there be some scumblings that produce atmospheres never seen on land or sea—scumblings got up to hide deficiencies of skill, and with the idea of producing not only perspective but that dreamy haziness of atmosphere sometimes mistaken for poetic feeling. It is well to look closely to the scumble, for though it is often used effectively by good artists, it is also a means within the grasp of the tyro and the bungler, and more frequently employed by them.

CHAPTER V.

VALUES.

We now come to the consideration of another feature of painting, intimately connected with light and shade, color, and aerial perspective, and vitally important to every picture, be it in high colors, in monotone, or simply in black and white; namely, values. Definitions of the term vary in meaning because value signifies not one, but several things, as I shall endeavor to explain to you.

The word as understood by Couture, Fromentin and others, means, in brief, the quantity of light or dark contained in a tone. Let me begin illustration at once. In an etching the unit of value is the white paper, and the darks hold a relation to it in proportion to their intensity, the black masses having more value than the gray masses, the gray masses more value than the faintly-indicated lines. A pen-and-ink drawing of a landscape, if true to nature, will show more value in the foreground than in the sky, more value in a black elm than in a white birch. In color the unit of value is that hue which contains the greatest luminosity, or, in other words, that

hue which approaches the nearest to pure white light. A lemon in a basket of fruit, for instance, will have more value than an orange, an orange more value than a bunch of purple grapes. Dark or shadow masses in black and white have a value as they *recede* from light; colors have a value as they *approach* light. The one is just the reverse of the other. You will understand this view of values then comprehends the variance in the light-absorbing powers of different tones, and the difference in pitch between one tone or color and another tone or color is a difference of value.

But the modern artists do not consider this the precise, the only meaning of value, especially in regard to color. To them it has a more subtile significance in the difference of pitch, not between a green and a red, a yellow and a blue, a black and a white, but between a yellow and a yellow, a red and a red, a white and a white. If a white handkerchief be thrown on the snow there will be some difference, slight though it may be, between the two whites. One will have more value than the other, and only by the emphasis of the difference could the effect be drawn or painted. Take, for example, a man dressed in white flannel, seated in a chair with his legs crossed one over the other so that one fold of the white flannel falls upon another fold. Here is the identical cloth—the same local tone; but the slight variation in the

position of the folds creates a difference in the pitch, a difference in value. This may be seen again in the "First Communion" pictures of Parisian artists, where the white dresses of young girls are relieved one against the other; in flower-pieces, where bunches of roses or daisies are painted in masses; in interiors, where articles of furniture similar in coloring are distinguished by slight differences in pitch; in portraits, where, for instance, a brown dress is thrown against a brown curtain background. What may be the cause of the difference of pitch between like-colored objects such as I have indicated would be hard to say; but I think it not so much the intervening atmosphere, of which I have next to speak, as the varying quantity of light received by the objects owing to their different positions.

Suppose yourself standing in the nave of a Gothic cathedral looking down the row of columns toward the transept. There would be, comparatively speaking, no difference in the coloring of the stone composing the different columns, and yet the column nearest you would have more value and appear stronger than the second one, the second would have more value than the third and so on. Suppose a line of policemen marching up the street; behind them fifteen yards comes another line; fifteen yards further back comes a third line. Their uniform—their coloring—is

the same, but not their values. The first line is more intense in coloring than the second, the second more intense than the third. A field of corn in the shock, a row of maple-trees along a road, a block of brown-stone houses will illustrate similar effects. Eliminate the coloring principle by comparing one white birch with another white birch twenty yards behind it, or the snow on one hill-top with the snow on another hill-top a hundred yards behind it, and again the difference in value will appear. This difference is caused by the intervening atmosphere; in fact, it is nothing but aerial perspective ; but it makes light and color appear of a different pitch, and for that reason it is regarded by artists as a difference in value.

There is still another meaning attached to value which is recognized by some artists and denied by others. I refer to values as seen in the relations of light and shade. Suppose yourself once more in the Gothic cathedral looking down the columns. A shaft of sunlight from the transept strikes across a single column of the line. Immediately there is a sharp difference in value, not due to atmosphere, but to the contrast of light with shade. This will be apparent again if we suppose two cows of identical color in a pasture, the one under the shade of a tree, the other in sunlight; or if we take a green meadow on a cloudy day with a rift of sunlight falling across the middle distance.

In both cases the difference is one between light and shade, but it is also a difference of value. Now if you look closely at the full face of a friend, a young lady, for instance, you will see the brightest-looking flesh on the nose, chin, and forehead. The cheeks are slightly duller, and around the throat and sides of the neck the shadows deepen the flesh-notes. Compare the nose with the cheek, the cheek with the side of the neck, and you will have three grades of values. Values will likewise appear in the lights and shades of an outstretched hand, the folds of a dress, the reflection of a red parasol over one's head. For though the cause is certainly little more than the relations of light and shade, yet the effect is nevertheless a difference in pitch or value. To be sure, you will find many artists not recognizing this last meaning in the sense of value, and then again you will find many others who do. At any rate it is worthy of mention here, and to be on the safe side you would better consider value as the quantity of light or dark contained in a tone *arising from any cause whatever.*

The value of a tone is estimated by its worth or importance as related to other tones, being either high or low, weak or strong. When tones and shades are placed in a picture precisely as they appear in nature the picture is technically spoken of as "good" or "true" in values; when the

artist fails to produce them as they naturally appear—fails to produce just relationships—his picture is called "weak" in values; and when he chooses to exaggerate them for purposes of artistic effect they are sometimes spoken of as "strong" in values. Of the latter class the pictures of Rembrandt and Goya, and the eastern pieces of Decamps, are good examples, though you will find writers of high rank, like Hamerton and Fromentin, saying that Goya and Decamps knew nothing whatever of values. As for the second class, the trumpet-blowing angels of Fra Angelico, with their pink-and-white pathetic faces, are instances of where values are "weak," and in the Egyptian wall-paintings they are quite unknown. Of pictures "true" or "good" in values an illustration may be taken from almost any good modern painter, say, Carolus-Duran, John Sargent, W. M. Chase, Carroll Beckwith, or George Inness.

Just precisely how you may decide if the values of a picture be good or bad, weak or strong, I can but imperfectly tell you. I have tried to point out to you what they are, and for the rest you must look at pictures and study Nature. Possibly you think you know Nature, but you will never know how deep as a well and wide as a barn-door is your ignorance of her until you study art. Generally speaking, false values in a picture may be noted not only by the lack of a difference in the

pitch of similar colors, but by the absence of proper gradation and atmospheric effect, and by the unreal appearance of the whole piece. Trees at varying distances will appear of the same value; people in a throng on the street will all be of equal prominence; the flesh-color on the throat will be as high-keyed as that on the chin; the policemen in the distance will be small replicas of the ones in the foreground. Every thing will be flat, the planes of the picture will be lost, the color gradations destroyed.

If you will pay a visit to the Metropolitan Museum in New York, and make a study of Lerolle's picture of the "Organ Rehearsal," you will find it a very good example of values well maintained. Likely some friend will call your attention to the manner in which the figures "stand out" of the canvas, and you will perhaps fancy you see that effect, but Lerolle never painted the picture with that end in view. He, and all other good artists, as Alfred Stevens has observed, strive to make their people "stand *in*." Notice now how well Lerolle has succeeded in doing this by giving each tone and color its proper emphasis. Notice the people in the foreground, how strong they are; compare their flesh and clothes with the flesh and clothes of the girl singing, and then compare the girl's clothes with the gallery of the church beyond and notice the difference in the values.

Notice also the atmospheric effect in the church, the perfect keeping of the accessory figures and furniture, and while you are looking at the picture be sure to notice that which is only suggested, namely, the vast space of the empty church to the side and in front of the railing. Again, if you will look at any of the landscapes of Corot, Rousseau, or Diaz, and will try to find something more in them than the "splash" and quantity of paint, you will see that the trees have not only a difference of local color in themselves, but also in relation to the other trees; that the houses, the clouds, and the hills hold a similar relation to each other; and that in the water, the grass, the roads, the small figures in the landscape there is a proper recognition of their different values.

You do not like them? and you do like this picture of Verboeckhoven, where the sheep, preceded by a shepherd, are supposed to be going out of a barn? Well, that is quite natural. It is one of the very worst pictures extant. Look at it again; those sheep will never leave the barn, for they have no more the power of motion than the wooden sheep in the Noah's ark of our youth. They are all stuck together because they are all of the same value. They are not thicker than a knife-blade, and even with all their weakness and thinness if they should move they would like enough tumble the barn over, for it is not made of

wood, but of pasteboard. The shepherd is not inside of the barn, as might be supposed, but is pinned like a paper doll against the blue sky seen through the door-way. If you look out through this door-way you will see that the "artist" intended the picture for a sunlight scene, but the blue sky is as false in value when contrasted with the barn interior as the barn interior is when contrasted with the man and the sheep. The man, the sheep, the floor, the sky—in fact, the whole thing is cut out of one flat piece, put together like a stage-setting, and gaudily painted, for what reason more than the making of money I cannot tell. It is unreal and untrue, resembling nothing seen by mortal eye in the heavens above, the earth beneath, or the waters under the earth. I cannot understand how such painters as Verboeckhoven and Meyer von Bremen ever pushed their false and inane productions on the art community as good work. And it is further incomprehensible to me why it is that now, when these men are known to be unworthy as painters, their work is still considered of that kind without a sample of which no gentleman's gallery would be complete. The first man knew nothing of painting; the second knew a trifle more than the first about the mechanical part of his art, but outbalanced any little virtue he possessed in that line by a whimpering sentimentality in his subjects which makes

children to laugh, women to cry, and men to grow profane with disgust.

From the sheep picture, devoid of values, turn to one where they are well maintained—this library interior of Meissonier.* Mark the increase of the shadow values as they fall away from the high light coming in at the window. Note the increase of the color notes as they *approach* that high light. Note again the difference in the pitch of similar colors as shown in velvets, books, tables, carvings, panelings. Yes, Meissonier is quite a master. To be sure, he has his failings, but they are not usually of a technical nature. He knows the language of art pretty thoroughly, but he does not always know what to say with it—regarding which something will be said further on.

* "In the Library." Morgan Collection.

CHAPTER VI.

TEXTURES AND QUALITIES.

The word textures in art is applied to the rendering of the peculiar qualities of any and all objects that are shown in a painting, whether they be silks, clouds, trees, or human beings. In nature there is a difference in material appearances, and all forms are distinguished one from the other by some peculiarity of make-up. To represent nature as she appears is an object of the painter, and he must represent her truly even though he have nothing but a brush and a few poor pigments wherewith to reproduce the likeness of the universe.

By way of illustrating the meaning of textures, let us suppose three bricks of the same size, one of gold, one of wood, and one of baked clay, placed in a row before us. The size, form, outline, or drawing will not mark them apart. The color may and does distinguish them somewhat, but we can easily imagine a red clay brick painted on canvas so smoothly that it would look as though molded of glass, or a gold brick rendered so flabbily that it would look as though carved out of

a pumpkin. With color it is necessary to give textures and qualities, and the three bricks have distinct peculiarities in these respects. For instance, the one of clay has rough surfaces and edges, is hard, porous, and reflects little or no light; the one of wood is of softer material, possesses grain and fiber, is not hard in outline, and, though smooth in surface, shows very little sheen; the one of gold is solid, metallic, heavy, has a smooth exterior, no veins or pores, and has a good deal of luster. These are the features whereby we distinguish the bricks apart in nature, and good art requires that these distinguishing features appear in a painting of them.

The severest test of the textures of a picture is to shut out with your hand a part of an object from the rest of the picture, and then ask yourself of it: Does that look like flesh, or wood, or stone, or cloth? The answer will not always be satisfactory. The artist who cannot make his wood look like wood, and his flesh like flesh, and his cloth like cloth, is a person very often met with; but the majority of us are very charitable toward his shortcomings through our own ignorance and lack of perception. Because the side of a house is divided up into small squares appearing eight inches by three inches in size, we take it for granted that the squares are clay bricks and not painted boards; and in another glaring white structure our

imagination recognizes a marble palace, though our eyes cannot say if it be of snow, abominable stucco, or simply one of Benjamin-Constant's lumps of magnesia. The world of picture viewers (especially the English world) meets the artist more than half way, and pieces out with its imagination his imperfections. A tree passes for a tree if it is correctly drawn, no matter whether its trunk be made of rock, brown mud, or cardboard; and a dress passes for a dress if it have the necessary number of plaits and folds in it, regardless of whether it be made of marble, as Sir Frederick Leighton paints it, or of leather, as Raphael and the Florentines represented it, or of muddy paint, as many of the Germans paint it.

The truth is that we have all been educated on line, and have totally overlooked or disregarded what is quite as important in art—that is, substance. An oval with some shadows and cross lines passes through the crucible of our mind and is metamorphosed into a human face, when it may not possess a single quality representing humanity. Even without our accommodating imagination how many of us are deceived by the pink and white portraits that yearly flood the exhibitions! We think they are true to life; but are they? There is a difference between the face of a wax doll and a face made up of bones, sinews, flesh, and blood. The wax is smooth, hard, shiny, immovable; the

flesh is porous, covered with slight roughnesses which serve to cast over it a blur about the outlines, is transparent, pliable, and palpitating with life. You have an admiration for Bouguereau's picture of the "Infant St. John," * but now if you will look at it critically some of your admiration will evaporate. Look at the flesh, and does it look like flesh or oiled tissue-paper? Has it life and blood in it? is it transparent? is it pliable? Certainly not, and yet you are right in thinking Bouguereau a famous artist. He is one of the most perfect draughtsmen that ever lived; but he cannot *paint.*

Turn from his flesh notes to those of Jules Breton, and we shall see something truer to nature in the picture of these girls "Returning from the Fields." † Flesh is here rendered as it should be in all the glow and flush of young healthy life. The color and texture are as they appear in nature. The scratch of a corn-stalk upon the cheeks will not tear them open; nor the sickle edge of the stubble cut the bare brown feet. There is pliability, strength, and endurance in such flesh. You think the tones too dark, too red, too coarse, but you must remember that they are peasants living in the open air, and again you are comparing their faces with the face of your friend close at hand. You cannot appreciate the dark-

* Morgan Collection. † Morgan Collection.

ness of flesh until you see it at a distance, for the depth of color beneath the skin is not apparent at close range. If you would understand what I mean, let your friend place her face close to a face in the picture, and then you go across the room to the end of the gallery and look at them. At a distance the skin becomes transparent, and we see even in a pale face a shade of red that surprises us by its depth. Oftentimes when near to view the flesh-tints of pictures look exaggerated; but if we stand back at the proper range we shall find they are not overdone.

This same Breton is an admirable technician in almost every respect. His large picture of the "Communicants," * though rather extravagant in conception and a little forced in sentiment perhaps, is nevertheless well painted throughout. The figures are truthfully done, the clothes look like clothes, the hair like hair, the flesh like flesh. Even the woods and stones and grasses and trees are well rendered, and for a striking piece of naturalism look at the straw thatching on the distant roofs. Nothing could look more like straw than that. Now if your admiration, the Verboeckhoven sheep picture, had any such qualities it might be esteemed in some sense a work of art, but it has not; the boards are not boards of wood, nor the man a man of flesh and bones,

* Morgan Collection.

nor the sheep covered with wool. As I said before, I cannot understand why people should admire such a profundity of crass ignorance. But they do—they always do. A little cheap glitter and glare are wonderfully effective in attracting attention, and the dunce is often crowned with glory where merit is treated like a court lackey.

Besides Breton, you will find scores of good painters of textures among the modern artists in France, Spain, Italy, and America. The English, as a rule, are not so good ; in fact, to put it harshly, they are bad painters, however excellent they may be as composers and draughtsmen. The annual exhibitions of the Royal Academy seem to grow more desert-like in dreariness each year, and it is only by the presence of such painters as Holl, Alma-Tadema, Carolus-Duran, Clara Montalba, Sargent, Parsons, and F. D. Millet that any interest at all is awakened in them. Menzel, Leibl, and some of the Munich painters seem to be the salvation of German art in the same way, for, with few exceptions, it is even more fatiguing than English art. For texture-painting pure and simple, the Dutchmen, Jan Steen, Terborch, Dou, Hals, Netscher, have never been surpassed ; and, among the moderns, such painters as Vollon, Stevens, Gérôme, Alma-Tadema, Madrazo, Ulrich, William M. Chase, may be called the leaders in producing realistic effects of texture and quality.

Fortuny was the equal of any one of them. The splendid painting shown in the "Spanish Marriage"* and "The Academicians of St. Luke"† in many respects has never been excelled. Even in so light a thing (comparatively speaking) as the water-color of the "Rare Vase,"‡ he shows his great mastery of the brush. To be sure, it is only a picture of a gouty-looking old gentleman in knee-breeches examining a vase in the middle of the room, and, aside from the color and the handling of it, is about as forcible as would be a picture of a horse-post looking at the curbstone; but then we are not seeking for great ideas just now, and this piece is capital in texture. There is not a great deal in the art of the Fortuny followers aside from its show of manual dexterity. In fact, its exponents have been called the school of the hand; but, to give them credit for what they succeed in doing, it may be said that they are unrivaled in the rendering of jewels, tapestries, fabrics, rugs, furs, feathers, vases, marbles, and things of that nature. Madrazo can paint silks and satins quite as well as Vollon can pumpkins, table-cloths, and dishes of fruit; but it takes something more than texture painting to make great works of art. It is a much-to-be-lamented fact in all art that those who *can*

* Cassin Collection, Paris.

† Wm. H. Stewart Collection, Paris.

‡ Morgan Collection.

paint are always expending time and energy on tea-trays and Dresden china; and those who *cannot* paint are forever aspiring skyward in search of sublime ideas.

In examining pictures for the rendering of textures you must not imagine that excellence in this line is confined to figure-pieces, interiors, and *genre* paintings. Where Vollon showed his brush-power in armor, flowers, and the wettest-looking fish ever brought out of the water, Courbet showed the same power in his marines and deer pictures, De Nittis in his street scenes, and Troyon in his river-banks and meadows. There is no better place for the display of texture painting than in landscape. There is a difference between a gray rock and the gray trunk of a tree between sand and water, between cloud and smoke; and it is much more of the landscape painter's art to emphasize these differences by textures and qualities than to stretch out miles of land or water before us, or to picture snow-clad mountains and beetling precipices in which we find not one particle of human interest or pleasure.

Leaves as they hang upon a tree do not appear flat and hard as they do when lying on the desk before us, and moreover they have an essential quality of motion. The slightest breath will sway them. Look at the photographs of a landscape,

and see how often the foliage is blurred. Nature is ever movable, pliable, ductile, and it has been truly said that she possesses few lines because she is not only rounded in form but ever moving. The lines appear only when she is hushed or dead. Yet still, in spite of what you know to be true, you insist upon admiring that Arabian Night landscape * with its glimpse of a fairy city—an "ideal" city, I presume—in the distance. You like the hazy Indian-summer dawning, the golden mist, and the great tree in the foreground (which never could have grown, for it never moved) with its every leaf picked out with white paint. There is no air in the picture, for the leaves would sway slightly, and that haze is a most palpable scumbling of gray paint against which warning was offered some time ago. The picture, again, is devoid of values; the tree is flat, not round, and its trunk might be made of iron or gray stone for aught one could tell from the texture of it. Compare it with the rock or earth in the foreground, and aside from the forms what is the difference between them? The tree, the woods, the fairy city, the sky, the air, are all made out of one thing, and remind one of no material quite so much as dirty paint. The whole is a part inheritance of the traditions of Thomas Cole and John Kensett—good Ameri-

* "Al Ayn—the Fountain," by F. E. Church. Morgan Collection.

can artists for their time, but the time was very bad.

Now, Corot, Rousseau, and Diaz never painted landscapes in any such superficial or empty manner. They sought to get at, not the outside shell, the exterior appearance of things alone, but their essence and substance. Line was nothing to them as compared with color, atmosphere, light, and the sense of motion, features which are utterly lacking in your Arabian Night picture. But you think the pictures of these artists are not at all well done. Corot's trees, in particular, you think are nothing but "daubs;" and you have made up your mind that he must have been a poor painter if he could do no better than that. Well, Corot lived a long life and painted in several different styles. All his earlier pictures are finished in detail, which would seem to disprove your theory that he did not elaborate his trees and leaves because he did not know how. Do not imagine that after painting foliage for nearly fifty years Corot had not a perfect knowledge of the forms of branches and leaves. He, with Rousseau, Diaz, Troyon, Daubigny, and others of the great French landscapists, knew very well how to paint "finely," if you mean by that minute finish; but after years of experience they learned that there was one thing more important than exploiting the detail of nature; namely, to bring forth to view her hidden beauties.

You do not like them after all that I may say. I know it; and I know you do not like the paintings of Rembrandt and Velasquez, nor Wagner's music, nor Goethe's poetry. But if you will only give them some study you will learn to like them by appreciating their great truth, power, and beauty. These men stand on lofty heights and seem to be lost in clouds; but if we could only rise to their level and stand beside them we should see farther, clearer, truer than we ever dreamed the mind's eye capable of seeing. One cannot judge correctly at a glance of that which has taken genius years to produce.

Water is another feature of landscape often painted with a curious disregard of its nature and texture. The limpid, transparent quality of it is hard to reproduce, and, moreover, its color is evanescent, iridescent, opalescent, according as the light strikes it or as we see it. Seen from a height, looking down, the local color of the water itself will appear. Seen from a horizontal vantage point, if the surface be smooth it will always reflect whatever may be directly over it—a flying bird, a flying cloud, the blue, gray, pink, or red sky, the branches of a tree, the rushes that fringe the banks. If roughened by wind the image is broken, and though each tiny wave reflects something, like the pieces of a broken mirror, yet there is no uniformity regarding the general effect.

Clouds, again, which are supposed to recede in a landscape and give the effect of distance, have perspective the same as the mountains or meadows. They likewise have values, light and shade, fleecy vapory transparent textures, and are affected in color and tone by atmosphere. They recede horizontally along the sky until lost on the horizon; they do not run up and down the back of the canvas like a curtain of cotton-bats, nor do they resemble clouds of factory smoke, sometimes put in the background of pictures to shut out the distance.

The bare ground, too, is a feature hard to render. Some of the country roads or turnpikes seen in pictures are but so many muddy streams along which the ever-present oxen with their cart seem to travel without sinking or drowning. The great difficulty seems to be that the road is made to appear smooth as a newly washed beach of sand, when in reality it is rough and characterized by many tints of color and checkered by innumerable lights and shades. Meissonier and Troyon show the texture of the earth about as truthfully as any of the painters, and even they occasionally find trouble with it, for it is an exceedingly difficult subject to handle.

The word qualities is often used in another sense than that of textures—in fact, is most generally used to denote characteristics of tone, color,

light. For instance, Corot is spoken of as having good qualities of light; Troyon, of atmosphere; Diaz, of color. Again, it is used to denote moral or intellectual properties of art. Thus Michael Angelo possessed qualities of power; Leonardo, of majesty; Raphael, of beauty; but this last use of the word is not the common one.

CHAPTER VII.

DRAWING AND FORM.

It is a common mistake of ours to suppose because we see therefore we are all-seeing, and because we know therefore we are all-knowing. Our senses tell us something and we at once jump at the conclusion that they tell us every thing.

Let us stand still a moment and listen to the distant sounds incessantly breaking the air like the roar of the ocean. People talking, windows rattling, carriages rumbling, bells clanging, whistles blowing. Here in the heart of the city, the sounds continue to fall hour after hour, day after day, yet the brain is indifferent and pays no heed to what the ear keeps telling it. Doubtless in this city of New York there are a hundred thousand men who daily light their cigars and cigarettes by the flame of alcohol burners in restaurants and cigar shops. While the tobacco is igniting every one of them looks steadily into the flame of the burner for some seconds. The flame originally is bluish, but as soon as the tobacco touches it it changes to purple, owing to the presence of potash in the latter. How many of the hundred thou-

sand in the course of all their cigar-lighting experience ever noticed it? Every hour of our lives we are placed in analogous positions. What we know and appreciate is but as a fillip to the great unknown. Here in the gallery the retina of the eye keeps photographing again and again countless beauties to which the brain is wholly indifferent. We are viewing pictures, looking at brilliant conceptions of form and color, seeing poetic fancies knocked off at white heat; yet passing unseen a thousand flashing jewels which for all our appreciation of them might as well be in the "deep bosom of the ocean buried."

What knowledge have we wherewith to decide the good or bad drawing of this or that picture? What do we know about form, and what do we know about nature? Let us put Mr. Ruskin's question, "How many ribs have we?" No answer. How are the muscles of the right arm distributed? How many bones in the hand? What is the shape of the collar-bone? Still no answers. We are not anatomists. Let us question regarding landscape. What is the difference between an oak leaf and a maple leaf? between the trunk of the oak and the trunk of the elm? In what way do the branches of the pine grow? Are grasses and green leaves dimmed or brightened by clouds in the sky? Under what conditions do the emerald greens of the ocean appear? Again we find that

we are not naturalists; and did we continue the questions regarding humanity, towns, cities, the earth, the air, the sea, or the sky, as to their constituent parts and different appearances, the answers would still be vague and unsatisfactory.

So we know nothing positively; we have no exact knowledge, but in its place casually obtained impressions. It behooves us then to be very careful in passing criticism on other people's study. Still, let us follow our impressions. It is not absolutely indispensable that we be scientists or anatomists. Good judgment and a sense of proportion with practice will teach us to note palpable falsehoods, and, for the rest, it is not necessary that we should look for pin-points of error with a microscope.

I cannot tell you in a few sentences any rules of drawing that would be of service to you in judging of pictures; and even should I devote several chapters to the subject, you might learn something of theory but little of practice. You have a general impression of how the human figure looks, and if you would see it correctly drawn you would do well to study closely the works of Bouguereau, Gérôme, Baudry, or Cabanel, among the moderns, and almost any of the Florentines, Romans, or Venetians among the ancients. We of to-day, who hide our nakedness under a mask of clothing, have gained from occasional glimpses of our own bodies, perhaps, only a

poor idea of the human form; but a study of the artists I have named may give some idea of the way we would have looked had nature been allowed to take its own course. Sometimes these artists make an elbow or a neck look queer by false shading, but that is trifling compared to the real truth and beauty, and at times even grandeur, with which they invest the nude form.

You possibly fancy that when clothes are put upon the figure the necessity for drawing and modeling vanishes, but such is not the case by any means. To make pictorial people that bear a resemblance to life, and are not manikins, it is necessary that the artist should thoroughly understand the human form and be capable of drawing it. Clothes of any kind make but little difference, for the appearance of form must be shown under them. In one sense they hide the figure, and in another sense they reveal it. A little picture by John La Farge called "A Woman Sleeping," exhibited at the Academy of Design a year or more ago, will illustrate my meaning to perfection, for in the figure there is the sense or feeling that the body is there, though hidden by a dress. To be sure, costume offers an opportunity to many artists of shirking labor, which they make the most of by painting what is nothing more nor less than a studio dummy. It consists of a head, two hands, and two feet, pro-

jecting from what is supposed to be a body, but which is nothing in reality but an antique garment. In other words, there is no drawing under the clothing, no unity, no proportion, no life. It is well to keep a sharp lookout for the studio dummy, for he is a very prevalent person in commercial pictures, and the number of times that we accept him as a *bona fide* type of the *genus homo* is simply astounding.

Drawing in landscapes is not supposed to be so vitally important as in figure-pictures—a statement which always stirs up the blood of the landscapists—yet it is worthy of more consideration than is usually given it. Every thing in nature has its peculiar form, and though the trunk of a tree may grow in any one of a thousand shapes, and thus leave more latitude for the choice of the artist than the trunk of a man, yet, nevertheless, it requires good drawing to make it appear natural and graceful. This is true again of a bank, a cloud, a mountain, a river, or a brook-side. It will be harder for you to put your hand upon a certain feature of a landscape and say, "That is wrong," than it will be in the human figure; yet, as with the figure, practice and the observation of nature will make you capable of recognizing gross errors; and for small defects, you are not to put your hand on them, nor notice them at all, unless they are so numerous as to hurt the picture.

The object of this talk is not to give you a start on the road toward hypercritical criticism, so that some day you will be able to grumble and pick petty flaws in works of art; but rather to aid you in distinguishing that which is palpably false from that which is generally true, and that you may thus better appreciate the true. As a rule, in technical matters we would do well to remember that the artist is an expert where the picture viewer is at best only a tyro; and that if we have studied the human form, the trees, the mountains, the rivers, and the clouds, the artist has done so likewise, not for a day or a week, but for a life-time—studied them not casually, but with a student's eye, learning their form for a fixed purpose.

The perfection of drawing is a very fine thing, and we soon learn to recognize it by the consciousness that the impression received from the artist is true. And when that stage of knowledge is arrived at, a hint of an exactly opposite nature is required. There is such a thing as too perfect drawing in a picture, paradoxical as it may sound to say so. Things of life, a flower, a tree, a man, have the power of motion either passively or actively. Look to it that your artist by his exact lines has not made them incapable of motion. In other words, beware of hard, stiff figures looking as though made of marble, like the figures of Mantegna. The academic line may be correct in every point, and yet

leave you but the outline of a stone statue. Immobility was the stumbling-block of David and Ingres, and you may see where it trips their followers, Cabanel, Gérôme, and even Bouguereau occasionally. To give the appearance of life and motion artists often purposely distort the drawing—at least it will appear so to you—and in order to explain this I shall have to ramble a little to one side.

It is the attempt of every true artist to paint, not reality, but the *appearance* of reality. I have spoken of this before, and I now wish to emphasize it still further. You know if one whirls a torch, with one end of it in a glow of coals, rapidly around the head we will see a ring of fire. Is there a ring, or does it only appear so? The wheel of a wagon in rapid motion seems to be a bewildering maze of spokes. Is it so in reality? A shooting star passing across the sky appears to leave a train of light behind it even after it has disappeared. Again, is this really the case? The explanation is simple. The retina of the eye retains the impression of the object for a short space of time after the reality has vanished. Could the appearance of whirling the torch be made apparent without the ring of fire? or the wagon-wheel in motion without the blended spokes? or the shooting-star without its trail of light? Paint the reality, and what would be the effect? The torch, the wheel, the shooting-star would be respectively standing still and not moving.

Now let us look at these Arab horsemen of Fromentin.* The horse of this falcon-flier going at full speed has been criticised because, forsooth, the body is too long and the hind-quarters are stretched out behind instead of being compactly knit together. You yourself think it out of drawing, and, to tell the truth, it does look a little peculiar when we take the animal apart, and examine him piece by piece. But stand back and see the effect of the whole. Is not the motion, the life, the fire, the dash, superb? Could any thing give us a better impression of the swiftness of flight? But this is only appearance again, and not reality. You know how a running horse actually runs and jumps, for you have seen the Muybridge instantaneous photographs of him—and a most unnatural, ungraceful combination of contortions he is. Now imagine this falconer astride of a horse painted after an instantaneous photograph, and could there be any thing more ridiculous? It might be reality, but it would not be true to nature, as we see and know her, and it certainly would not do for art. At the races, when the horses are on the home-stretch, they are put to their greatest speed. It is then that the gilded youth in the checked suit speaks of them as "stretching out and hugging the ground." We know what he means. The faster the horses go

* Morgan Collection.

the more they appear to lengthen out, because the retina of our eye deceives us by retaining the vanished parts of the horse. You will now see why Fromentin's horses are said to be badly drawn; but I hope you will agree with me that the criticism is captious and ill-founded. The artist sought to convey the idea of swift flight, and he succeeded most admirably.

A similar objection has been brought to some of the figures of Blake and Michael Angelo. That they are out of drawing and distorted as compared with the immovable model is most true, and Blake and Michael Angelo knew it very well at the time, but chose to ignore the real for the apparent truth. Blake's idea was to suggest motion, and if you will look at the long-limbed, uncanny figures in his illustrations of *Europe* you will see how well he carried out that idea. As for Michael Angelo, his line is like the mighty wave of a sea. It carries us along with the resistless idea of power. To be sure, we can make rules for the waves, as for all things. They should be of a certain height, breadth, weight, they should flow so far, and ebb so much, and the rule for general use may be true and practicable; but when genius comes men and laws and yard-sticks are all swept away by the first breaker.

Blake and Michael Angelo and Fromentin were right. The perfect drawing of the Venus of Milo

would not give the appearance of a living woman. The line would be too rigid. The human figure is ever moving, swaying, respiring, absorbing. It is never still as marble except when lifeless. The nudes of Henner or Diaz or Millet in which the outlines are blurred or lost will give a good idea of what I mean. They live and breathe in the atmosphere of their surroundings; they are placed *in* atmosphere, and not *against* it; they move and are moved by a physical life. Something of a similar nature will be found in almost all the work of Correggio, in Titian, in Delacroix, in John La Farge. In deed, the more familiar we become with both nature and art the keener will we appreciate the truth that there is something more in drawing than the crowding of flesh-notes into an outline of a human figure. It is well, then, that we should not rely too much upon the academic line, for it may be true to reality and anatomy, yet false to art and the apparent; it may keep the word of promise in the letter, yet break it in the spirit; it may destroy life by immobility, and beauty by conventionality.

In landscape we have already instanced how all things move and sway either by an active or passive force, and the same caution against the too Procrustean line is applicable here. Landscape is not a piece of embroidery cast upon a background of the sky, but a consistent mass blended together by a natural affinity. Once more the saying is true

that there are few lines in nature. A wind, a cloud, a ray of light may make them come and go like the scenes of a magic lantern. Yet it is very hard for us to realize that nature is not immovable. We get an impression that she is a fixed fact—no one knows how—and we retain it—no one knows why—with all the tenacity of ignorant obstinacy even when our superiors, the artists, try to show us a different way of looking at her. You are ready to find fault with Corot, Rousseau, Diaz, and Daubigny because the leaves of their trees are not drawn and finished so that you can see each one. You think that Mr. Ruskin is right in railing at the "blottesque style," and that such foliage as they produced never was seen in this world. Well, all rests with those who see. It may be as you think, but it argues something that these men after looking at foliage all their lives thought they saw it blurred and swaying instead of rigid and immovable like the needles of a Christmas-tree. To paint foliage they took the appearance of the whole in mass, not the appearance of the part in detail. They painted precisely what they saw, not what they knew to exist. Botanical knowledge of leaves and their growth is not half so much needed in landscape-painting as clear eyes to catch momentary impressions. And the strongest impression one receives from foliage is that of a transparent movable mass of color and light and

shade. Comparatively speaking, it has no drawing. A chair, a building, an animal may be chiefly remarkable for line, but how do we recognize a snow-bank, a cloud, or a bunch of leaves? Certainly not by line, but rather by qualities such as color, lightness, transparency, shadow inequalities. If one should take up a rose and exclaim, "What a perfect form!" we would think the exclamation a strange one. We would expect to hear something like, "What lovely color! how delicate, light, and fluffy!" A mass of foliage moving or having the power of motion and reduced to picture size will appear to be nothing but color and broken lights and shades. Especially is this true if the sight be focused upon one central feature, such as light. In such a case, as we have already attempted to set forth, the foliage, if at the sides, would be obscure and indistinct. Look at a word in the center of a page of type, and how distinctly can you see the words at the bottom or top? Does not distinctness vanish into uncertainty in an ever-widening circle from the center of vision?

Again, if the question of the truth or the falsity to nature be entirely thrown out of consideration, we shall see that it is necessary for art's sake that details be suppressed. Leaves, grass, sticks, weeds, are not the most important things in landscape. The less is not entitled to so much consideration as the greater; and to heighten the value of the

latter the former must be subordinated. There is a law of concentration in painting as in the drama which requires the sacrifice of the inferior for the glory of the superior. It was spoken of before, and we shall soon have occasion to speak of it again.

The perfect line in landscape is even worse in its effects than in the figure. It renders nature rigid, statuesque, immovable, which she never is; it constrains the genius of the artist within certain conventional boundary lines, whereas his model is unconstrained, and capable of a thousand moods; it centers the attention upon nature's external form, so that the internal spirit, the deeper, nobler, truer part of her, lacks interpretation and is lost. You have heard the saying of the School of Fine Arts that "form is absolute." Take the saying, which is more absolute than the form, with a grain of allowance. If it were literally true the painter's occupation would be gone, for the camera is more absolutely perfect than the hand of any artist, past or present. There is something more in art than accuracy, and something more in painting than form and line. Color is an element, motion is an element; life, zest, power, thought, feeling, passion, all enter into the problem; and, lastly, there is the individuality of genius, which is often more absolute in its sway than all the other considerations put together. Blake, Michael An-

gelo, Millet, Corot, Rousseau, Troyon, all possessed this last quality, and when we are in the presence of their works we are quite willing to throw aside all rules and accept simply their say-so in place of them. For such is the strength of individuality, the power of genius, that it pushes aside the conventional barriers set up to restrain it, and its very defiance of rule, looked upon at first with disapproval, finally becomes a rule of action for others to follow.

CHAPTER VIII.

COMPOSITION.

PICTORIAL composition may be defined as the proportionate arranging and unifying of the different features and objects of a picture. It is not the huddling together of miscellaneous studio properties—a dummy, a vase, a rug here, and a sofa, a fire-place, a table there; it is not the lugging in by the ears of unimportant people to fill up the background of the canvas, as in the spectacular play; it is not taking a real group from nature and transplanting it upon canvas. There must be an exercise of judgment on the part of the artist as to fitness and position, as to harmony of relation, proportion, color, light; and there must be a skillful uniting of all the parts into one perfect whole.

If we turn to the novel, the poem, or the drama we shall find that they are always constructed with a due regard to the importance of one person: the heroine or hero. All the other characters, the scenes, plots, and counterplots, are merely accessories leading up to and upholding the chief person. The people hold positions of relative importance according to their rank, and they all move

like an army, the wings supporting the center. You may not have noticed this, but if you will analyze any novel or play, or watch closely a stage representation, you will find the skeletons of them as I have described. Examine *Hamlet*, *The Lady of the Lake*, or *Adam Bede*, and in any one of them you will readily perceive that all the minor people are merely the mouthpieces of the author whereby he brings out the thoughts or actions of the chief actor.

There is a perfect analogy between any good play, poem, or novel and a well composed picture. They all depend upon the force of some leading character; they all use subordinate characters as the supporters of the hero or heroine; they all sacrifice the less to enhance the brilliancy of the greater. The proper composition of a figure picture, then, requires the superior importance of one person, object, or feature. This feature must be strong enough and prominent enough to rule every other feature in the picture. If, for instance, an artist would paint the Last Supper, the figure of Christ must be central in position, light, and color. It is no matter what were the positions in the actual scene centuries ago. Historic truth, if it were known, must be sacrificed to art truth. The figure of Christ is all predominant, and should have first place. Next him should come John the Beloved, and thereafter the apostles ranged on

either side in the order of their importance, Judas, perhaps, being at the far end in vague and shadowy drawing. Look at the engravings of Leonardo's "Last Supper" and note this arrangement.

Again, if the scene of Macbeth with the witches on the heath would be artistically expressed, Macbeth must be of first importance, hold central place, and draw the eye at once. The witches, the fire, the caldron, and all that, would be of comparatively little consequence—quite as little in the picture as they hold in Shakespeare's play. So, again, in the case of historical pictures, if Napoleon review his troops at Friedland* it will be from a central point surrounded by his officers; and if Germanicus have a triumph † he will certainly hold a conspicuous place in the scene. Any of the pictures of the old Italian masters will illustrate centralized composition, especially those of the Venetians, Tintoret, Paul Veronese, and Tiepolo.

The same law is observed in the composition of landscapes. In the representation of a sunset the sun or its light must attract the greatest attention, and be nearly central in position. Claude and Turner illustrate this in almost all of their paintings, though in some cases they are

* Meissonier's "Friedland—1807."

† Piloty's "Triumph of Germanicus," New Pinacothek, Munich.

much given to elaborating details with unnecessary nicety. Corot does not attempt any thing so brilliant, but depends for effect upon pale light at morning or evening. This he makes all-powerful by the centering of interest upon it at the expense of other features. It is the first, last, and greatest beauty of his landscapes, and you cannot appreciate Corot (or for that matter any other artist) unless you strive to understand him in the light of his own interpretation. Rousseau and Diaz are not always so single in aim or simple in method as Corot. Their chief dependence is upon foliage, color, and masses of light and shade; yet in almost any of their works it will not be hard to see what features the painters loved the best and strove to bring out the most conspicuously.

Given the law of special prominence in composition which builds a picture upon the pattern of a pyramid, though the scaffolding is never shown, there is still a further consideration which the careful artist looks to. There must be a harmony of relation between the parts and a unity of them all for one well-defined purpose. Each part is but a block of the mosaic, and should form a factor of the whole. If we examine a group of people in a photograph—say they are summer idlers on the rocks at Mt. Desert—we shall find the most of them looking straight at us out of the picture. A few of them may be looking to one side, a young man may

be watching intently some girl next to him for the purpose of showing his profile, which he thinks, perhaps, is the best part of him, and a young girl may be gazing romantically out to sea; but there is one thing we notice regardless of positions. Each one of them is self-conscious, posing, thinking only of an attitude. They have all forgotten their companions and their surroundings; the cap is off the camera; "all quiet now for just a second;" their picture is being taken. The photograph shows this; the people are huddled together within the focus of the camera; each is by himself and for himself, having nothing whatever to do with his neighbors. There is no harmony of relation, no unity for effect; in fact, there is no grouping, but rather a series of individual photographs taken upon one plate.

It is a difficulty which the young painter invariably meets with (and the young novelist stumbles over it likewise), that he cannot make his characters appear unconscious. They will persist in posing for their picture. Virginius, with dagger raised to strike his daughter, pauses, his hand in mid-air, because the cap is off the camera; Virginia has her mouth half opened, as though to shriek, but thinks possibly it might spoil the effect, so remains motionless; Appius Claudius on his high judgment seat is trying his best to look thoughtful, like Michael Angelo's "Giuliano de Medici;" and

the soldiers and Romans who form the mob in attendance care not a rap for any thing in or about the scene. There is nothing to show that the characters are absorbed, or even interested, in the trial; nothing to show that the center of interest is in father or daughter; nothing to show that any one knows the person next to him. In other words, they are not Romans excited at injustice and horror-stricken at its consequence—not a moving mass carried away by one theme and rendered unconscious to surroundings—but, on the contrary, studio models put in one at a time, possibly with some regard to their relative positions, but with no regard to their harmony of relation and general unity.

The "Sabine Women" of David in the Louvre is a most beautiful instance of the lack of unity. The stiff-legged young warrior with the raised spear in the foreground, his attitudinized antagonist and the woman interposing between them have nothing whatever in common. The combat is imaginary with the spectator; the people in the picture have no idea of fighting, shrieking, or even moving. They are studio dummies, drawn separately and placed in one canvas with an idea that they would possibly affiliate, or fight, but they do neither the one nor the other any more than the tin soldiers of our boyhood. One might think, from some of their works, that David and Ingres

painted pictures much as Trollope is supposed to have written novels; namely, by making a beginning anyhow, and trusting to luck for an appropriate ending.

I have taken extreme cases to point more forcibly what you will often see in figure compositions and not infrequently in landscapes—that is, the patching together of isolated parts with the idea of producing a whole piece. The artist not having seen his work in mass or in its general effect, not having conceived it as a whole and complete idea, seeks to blunder into unity by filling in features here and there. I must illustrate this still further by referring you once more to the Verboeckhoven sheep picture, which seems to exemplify every failing in art. The objects in it are disunited and separated. The man does not see the sheep, nor the sheep the man; the barn is wholly superfluous; and the trees and the sky look as though they originally belonged to another picture which had been partially painted over for the sake of introducing the barn and its contents. There never was any attempt to conceive the scene in its entirety, or to paint it with a regard to its unity. The painter simply daubed a barn against a sky, and some sheep against a barn, and sold it the next day to some simpleton as a "pastoral effect."

Gérôme's tulip picture may answer as another example of poor composition—an unusual thing

in his work. It bothers you to understand the meaning of that man in the middle of the tulip patch drawing his sword, and the other men running toward him. You do not see the point of it, or get the force of the story. Possibly if there were more unity between the figures you might understand it better, though it may be well to remark in parenthesis that it is not the object of painting to disclose plots or tell stories. Vibert's picture, with its red-robed cardinals listening to the missionary's story, is, on the contrary, quite good in composition. The positions are natural and unconscious, the people for the main are interested in the tale, and the oneness of the group is well indicated. Still better are these "Arab Horsemen"* of Fromentin, dashing across a stream and down a dark ravine. They are all bent on gaining some one point, horses as well as men. The ground, the stream, the rocky ravine, the atmosphere, the light, all belong there, and correspond to one another. There is no patch-work about it, but a scene with all its accessories caught from the life. Fromentin you will almost always find good in unity. His pictures of the desert, with their hot air, rising dust, burning skies, shrouded Bedouins, and Arab horses, show this. Decamps in his groups and interiors, his stables with braying donkeys, his street

* Morgan Collection. Another of similar subject in the Metropolitan Museum.

scenes, is likewise excellent in this line. In fact, there are many artists who excel in it; and among the landscapists any one of those whom I have previously mentioned—Rousseau, Corot, or Dupré —will illustrate its necessity and value.

A final word regarding composition. The light must come from one point of the compass, affecting all objects proportionately, and one atmosphere must envelop and surround the whole. Of course, you know this to be the state of affairs in nature, and so do the painters, but we do not always find it so represented in art. Even Diaz in landscapes, especially in his Fontainebleau pieces, of which we have spoken, gets sunlight badly twisted at times. To be sure, we do not often notice it, but then the error is there. Daubigny and Corot are as near perfection in light and atmosphere as imagination can fancy. This Seine picture* of the former is beautiful with its uniformly diffused gray lights. The overspreading clouds tinge the whole scene with softness, the river no less than the reeds that fringe the banks, the ground no less than the nodding trees. The air, again, is equalized throughout; it touches the stones with moisture, it ruffles the surface of the river, it lifts up the leaves of the trees with gentle breath, it pervades the whole picture as intensely as though it were golden sunshine.

* Morgan Collection.

Breton in such works as the "Communicants" and the "Evening at Finisterre," Marilhat in his pictures of Egyptian life, Rico in his Venetian scenes, and Fortuny in his Algerian and Spanish subjects all excel in amalgamating the different features and objects of a picture into one consistent and living whole. This amalgamation or fusion of parts is always necessary to good composition. Every object, light, color, shadow, and effect must hold each its place and make for the general unity of the whole. There may be an infinite variety of men and horses in a troop of cavalry, yet if they are properly commanded they move as a unified body; and so, in a sunset, though the deepened shadows may fill the valleys, and the mountain heights and castellated peaks be tinged with flaming purple, and along the sky float innumerable companies of clouds shotten with scarlet and gold, yet each beauty of the scene bears allegiance to a universal beauty, and each splendor is but a part of the universal splendor flung off in radiant circles from the sun itself.

CHAPTER IX.

THE OBJECT OF ART.

And now that we have examined somewhat of the language of art, it may be well to pause and inquire: What is the object of this language? What is the object of any language unless it be to express an idea, a thought, a fancy, a conception of the mind, or an emotion of the heart? If it convey no meaning it is entitled to no serious consideration. There may be some charm about a manner of talking, and there *is* beauty in the manner of painting, but the higher aim of any language is not to exhibit itself for its own sake, but to express the ideas and meanings of men.

We are here in the gallery examining the technical part of art; we are admiring this light and that color, marking the grouping here, the textures there, studying a piece of drawing, and wondering over a bit of perspective; and we are rightly admiring these technical features as beautiful in themselves, but what is it that we shall take away from the galleries with us? An impression, surely, but will it be one of well-drawn hands, finely painted clothes, and good color; one of rug text-

ure, jewel brilliancy, and foliage lightness? No; we shall forget about these features. They are not sufficient in themselves to impress us very deeply. There is a stronger element in the picture, if it be a masterpiece of its kind; and that is the artist's conception, thought, or feeling. We shall carry away the impression of his idea, imagination, or creation; we shall feel the power of his individuality.

How many stanzas of Longfellow's poem of "The Bridge" can you remember? You do not recollect the words, but you have a distinct remembrance of the poem. Well, what is the impression of it left upon your mind? Is it not one of profound melancholy at the ebb and flow of life, the come and go, the disappointment, the unfulfilled hope, the final resignation? And what do we now remember of Harvey Birch, the Spy of Washington? What do we know about his dress, lineage, look, talk? We can hardly remember a sentence that he spoke, and we know little or nothing of the dramatic situations in which Cooper placed him. In fact, the artistic efforts used to create the Spy have all been forgotten; but not so the impression of the character. The creation of the novelist still lives in our minds in shadowy form, and in it we see a hero who suffered ignominy in obedience to orders, who was shot as a traitor, dying in silence that he might serve his

country, when a word from his lips could have saved his life.

You have no doubt seen Millet's picture of "The Sower," * yet can you tell me accurately its color, drawing, light, atmosphere, textures? Do you know the position of the right leg; can you say how many oxen there are on the neighboring hill? I doubt if you can, but you remember the picture; you can never forget it. And what is your remembrance? It is that of a shadowy figure at dusk, moving across the fields with rhythmic motion scattering the grain. He looks gigantic in proportions, a man of sinews, heart, and brain; a man who tills the fields, as God decreed all men should; a man who in a humble sphere is no less a hero than he who sweeps over the same field at the head of cavalry. This is Millet's conception, this is what he is striving to tell you with his colors and shadows, this is what you feel and the impression that you receive. The same thought is apparent in this half-finished picture of "The Spaders." † In a short time you will forget all about the half-finish and the charcoal lines, and will retain only the look of those solemn faces and the splendid motion of the figures, just as they who visit the Sistine Chapel at Rome carry away only the impression of the sad-browed Sibyls, the mighty Prophets, of Michael Angelo.

* Vanderbilt Gallery, New York. † Morgan Collection.

We shall not go far astray then in saying that the stronger part of art is not its language, but the ideas which that language expresses; that it is not so much the *technique*, brush work, or handling for their own sake as for the conceptions they can present to us. Let us say at once, then, that what is said is of more importance than the manner of saying; that the chief aim of art is to express ideas, feelings, impressions, or beliefs of the artist; and that the language of art, the drawing, modeling, coloring, and all, are but parts of speech which enable the artist to frame a sentence and convey a thought.

Discard the idea, which you may have received from friends, who are artists perhaps, that the only aim of art is the expression of technical skill. It could be as well maintained that the object of poetry is to display rhythmical words and sentences after the Swinburnian manner, and that poetic ideas are of no consequence. Skill of hand is important—aye, absolutely necessary; but it is the means of saying, not the end or that which is said. I will not say, for the sake of making a point in argument, that these art-means are not interesting in themselves, nor that Tennysonian and Swinburnian verse is not agreeable, even though it may contain no meaning. To the initiated the manner in which Goya and Velasquez paint a dress, the power with which Rembrandt focuses light, the

dash and brilliancy of Fortuny, the strength of Courbet, are almost as pleasing as the great ideas of Michael Angelo and the poetic sentiment of Millet. The skill of the craftsman is admirable, especially to brother-craftsmen ; but the work of the hand and the conception of the mind must not bear a false relationship to one another. The thought is greater than the means of expression, but there is beauty in both. Despise neither, but place the former above the latter.

You may be possessed of the idea that the object of a painting is to see how closely the artist can imitate nature—many people have such an idea. I beg of you to discard that likewise. Imitation never made any thing worth looking at the second time. The world is indebted to it for nothing. The imitators have all died, like "poor Poll," without leaving a trace of any thing we appreciate or care for. Their labor has been too ignoble and purely mechanical to endure. The painter detailing nature upon canvas line upon line, with no hope, object, or ambition but that of rendering nature as she is, is but unsuccessfully rivaling the photograph camera. The sculptor working in a similar fashion is but emulating the hideousness of the wax figure. No ; the object of painting is not to deceive, and make one think he stands in the presence of real life. Art is not the delineating of peanuts and postage-stamps in such a real-

istic manner that you stretch out your hand to pick them up; nor the molding of bronze and marble so that you start with surprise when you find they are not living. True, painting and sculpture are classed among the imitative arts, and so is poetry; but consider how far removed from reality is poetic language, and consider how wide the gulf between nature and the greatest masterpieces of painting. The idea of imitation is a false conception of art throughout. Painting is a language, and trees, sky, air, water, men, cities, streets, buildings, are but the symbols of ideas which play their part in the conception.

But you may think that though literal imitation is despicable enough yet a truth to nature is absolutely necessary, and the measure of this truth attained makes a great artist or an inferior one. You may agree with Mr. Ruskin that this truth to nature is the aim of art. Again I beg of you to discard the idea. Truth is not the aim of any of the arts. Their object is to please, not to instruct. If we wish to be taught we shall go to science, which has the one object of finding out the truth. Painting should please us with æsthetic ideas, received through the sense of sight, precisely as poetry should please us with æsthetic ideas received through the sense of hearing; and the value of each depends very much on the quality and quantity of pleasure given. If truth alone were the

object of either of these arts it would appear as though Meissonier were greater than Raphael or Michael Angelo, and Pope greater than Shakespeare or Milton. Mind you, I am not quarreling with the painter's or poet's veracity. Truth is absolutely necessary in painting, just as necessary as color, oil, and paint-brushes; but I would have you discriminate between an accessory and a principle. Truth is quite indispensable in a picture, but, remember, it is the means whereby the language of art is made easily recognizable, and not the end in itself.

But you say: "Of course the plain brutal truth of nature is not the aim of art; it is too realistic. The painter must strive after the ideal; nature must be idealized, heightened, glorified." Now, do you know exactly what you mean by the ideal? Have you ever heard a satisfactory or comprehensible explanation of it? Do you know any one who understands what it means? People talk knowingly of the ideal, of Phidias and Raphael, of Kant and Hegel, and when we come to sift down their meaning to a practical application in modern painting they mean a fair head or figure imitated from the artist's recollections of Greek sculpture; or a figure, city, or landscape formed in the artist's mind by the union of many fancies. Such work is quite worthless, except for decorative purposes, and as serious art has no good reason for existence.

There are others who think they recognize the ideal in another way. When Daubigny, for instance, paints a landscape with a certain haziness of atmosphere and line they call him an idealist, and when Bastien-Lepage paints the same landscape without the haziness they call him a realist. The true idealism of modern times presupposes the existence of a universal perfection in nature and life, toward which mankind aspires, and the painter who comes the nearest to the supposed universal perfection is accounted the greatest artist. Whether this has an existence in fact, as in theory, I have now neither the time nor the inclination to inquire. I quarreled once with what I conceived to be the false interpretation of the word "ideal" in modern art, but with little result. People will continue to write and talk in a vague way about ideals, and fancy they see and feel them. Perhaps they do; but, as this is a practical talk, I wish to advise you to quietly lay the ideal on the shelf for the first ten years of your picture-viewing experience. At the end of that time you may be able to decide about it for yourself, and you may find that you are capable of enjoying pictures without a blessed thought of ideals of any kind. Do not bother about it under that name, at any rate, but in its place look for the artist's meaning in his picture; strive to find out what he is saying to you; put yourself in his place, and try to see as he sees. In other words,

look not for the artist's *ideal*, but for his *idea*. The latter you may with practice readily discover; the former you may never recognize, for the ideal is more in the metaphysician's head than in the head of the *modern* artist.

You have heard somewhat of the necessity for the beautiful in art, and are perhaps now wondering what part it plays in painting and just where it comes in. I will try to explain in a few words my own idea of it, avoiding metaphysics as much as possible. Beauty may be an attribute of things tangible or intangible ; that is, in practical illustration it may attach itself to the form and features of a head, and it may also be an attribute of a thought emanating from that head. One set of metaphysicians will tell you that it exists in the features *per se*, and that beauty is objective; another set is equally certain that it is only in the thought, and that beauty is subjective. If we take a sober view of the matter we shall see that neither is exclusively right. Beauty may belong to either the objective or subjective world.

I cannot here enter into an argument to prove that beauty may be an attribute of external life ; moreover, I have written of this at some length in another work.* It will not, however, be hard for you to believe that there is a beauty about sunsets, mountains, valleys, and animals, independent of

* *Principles of Art*, Part II, Chap. I.

man or his thoughts. If loveliness is an attribute of the flower, why is not beauty an attribute of higher creations? Our perception or lack of perception of beauty has nothing whatever to do with its existence. The Patagonian Indian and the African Hottentot see no beauty in the forest, but does it follow therefrom that there is none? Whether seen or unseen it is there, and that beauty which is seen by all is usually of a commonplace kind, often portrayed in painting.

It is the object of one kind of art to picture this natural beauty, and when accompanied by some individuality, enthusiasm, feeling, or method in the artist it is not an unworthy aim. Oftener it appears unaccompanied by these latter qualities, and it then sinks to the level of decorative art. It is most frequently portrayed in the human figure. Every exhibition of paintings has its numbers of "ideal" heads and figures, which, if we analyze closely, prove to be only the modified portraits of pretty-faced studio models. The pretty model likewise obtrudes herself under different names upon many compositions, but she never has any thing to commend herself but her face. She is generally devoid of character and force, and you could say at a glance that her head never ached with an idea. Look about you in the gallery and you will see her companions. Bouguereau always paints them, Henner is fond of them, Meyer von Bremen

loves them, and Gérôme does not despise them. They are all pleasant enough in their way, especially to the masses, and it is to their pretty subjects that some artists are indebted for their popularity; but the faces are inwardly empty, the beauty is only skin-deep.

Natural beauty is again represented by the production of the commonplace scenes in landscape with which we are all familiar. They correspond to the studio model, regarding whom we have just been speaking. A familiar scene—a valley, lake, mountain, or brook-side—is chosen, and painted as it is, with lack of thought and want of feeling, painted simply that you may have a fac-simile of what you possibly may not possess in reality. Such pictures are good reminders of the places we have visited, like the photographs we buy along the line of travel, and they may not improperly serve to conceal a break in the wall-paper of the drawing-room; but they scarcely add to the world of art.

Somewhat of a change takes place in the character and value of the painting when the natural beauty is not commonplace, but comparatively unknown. For the object of every true artist is in one sense to discover hidden beauty and to reveal it to the world, which, by reason of not possessing the eye of genius, is blind to it. We then have a new beauty, for which we may thank our explorer, the artist. It may be that the hidden beauty lies

in a form commonplace, almost repulsive. There is such a thing as the beauty of the ugly, of which the Germans have written somewhat. Not alone the face of youth is beautiful; age possesses it even in humble life. Did not Rembrandt bring it forth in his aged and wrinkled faces, and Leonardo in his demons? Frère, Millet, Breton, Lerolle, Mauve, and Israels — what a charm they have thrown about the coarse-featured, heavy-headed peasantry! It is all true and all beautiful, but it was entirely unknown and unseen before these painters came into the world. In a similar manner there is a new beauty in the light of Corot, the foliage of Rousseau, the gray, voyaging clouds of Daubigny, the stormy skies of Courbet. We recognize it again in the tigers of Delacroix,* in the children groups of Diaz, in the cattle of Troyon, and in a less degree in the satins and armor of Fortuny and the fish and fruit of Vollon. These men are not imitators—not parrots reiterating a well-worn theme—but, on the contrary, revealers of new features and interpreters of new beauties.

So, then, it is not a little part of the artist's aim that he discover and interpret to the world new beauty, and the value of his work may be estimated by the importance of his discovery. This is the rendering of objective beauty, tinctured, perhaps, by the painter's individuality, method, or feeling;

* Morgan Collection.

but there is a higher beauty in the subjective of which it is necessary to speak. The most perfect beauty lies not in external surroundings, but in the conception of the human mind. There is nothing in nature that may be compared with it; beauties of form, texture, or quality sink into insignificance beside it; it is predominant and omnipotent. It would seem, therefore, that the artist who discovers natural beauty and interprets it is not so great as the artist who creates beauty and uses the forms of nature merely as a means of explaining his creation.

Take the "Sower" of Millet, and what is it that we admire about it? A hundred living artists could excel the drawing, a hundred could excel the rendering of textures and light. The figure is of little consequence. In any street in Paris might have been found a physical man of more perfect make-up. It is the thought, the conception of heroism in humble life, that is strikingly beautiful. You may remember seeing in Rome the statue of "Moses" by Michael Angelo. As a piece of mechanical work it is not wonderful. I doubt not that Canova could have equaled, if not excelled, Michael Angelo as a carver and polisher. But there is something in the "Moses" that is worth all the marbles Canova ever cut. It is the conception of tremendous power, the conceived ability of Moses to overawe, crush, destroy all

things before him. In the Prophets and Sybils of the Sistine some of the same power is apparent, combined with solemnity, mystery, weirdness, even the spirit of that prophecy which characterized the originals. The conceptions are lofty to sublimity, nor are the forms at all unworthy of the ideas they embody; but they are not so great as the latter. Bouguereau could have drawn them as well; Delacroix could have given them a more harmonious coloring; Alfred Stevens or Carolus-Duran could have painted their garments much better; but all of them together could not have created that idea of mystery and power which attaches to them.

In the Old Pinacothek, at Munich, is a picture by Rubens of the "Christ on the Cross." It is the dead Christ hanging there alone in the night with drooped head and flowing hair, and in the background a black sky over the distant Jerusalem. There is no color to it of consequence, and color was a great feature of Rubens' art; it is not overwell drawn, nor will it compare with some of his other works in painting; but there is about it the blinding horror of the scene, the blackness of darkness, the awfulness of the deed. The power, the dread, the strength of death are overwhelming. The conviction rushes upon you irresistibly that the Crucified hanging upon the cross is not a human being, but the real Son of God. How the mind of Rubens ever soared so high as to grasp

that conception baffles comprehension. For the idea seems great even above Rubens's greatness. Of course, the painting of it is not what one would call poorly done, for Rubens was too good a painter for that; but when you come to look upon the picture you will never see paint, or line, or texture. The conception absorbs every thing else.

The landscapes of Corot, that is, the nobler ones like the "Danse des Amours,"* are great in a similar way. The technical part of the "Danse des Amours" is most excellent, and yet it fades into insignificance when compared with the predominant and beautiful conception of light. Still another instance of art excellent by the predominance of idea may be taken from the work of an American artist — Mr. Albert Ryder. You have doubtless seen a small sea-piece of his, often exhibited in New York, called "A Waste of Waters is Their Field."† It is little larger than your two hands, and represents a fisher-boat tossed by the waves of mid-ocean. The light is dull, the figures and boat mere suggestions, and the waves scarcely distinguishable, as I remember them; yet there is an indefinable something about the picture that draws us to it. It is not the painting of it, for that is hardly up to the average. I can scarcely describe what it is except by saying that the picture

* Charles A. Dana Collection, New York.

† D. Cottier Collection, New York.

conveys to one the idea of the loneliness, the weirdness, the wildness of a continued existence at sea amid storms and tempests and dangers innumerable. The craft with her dusky crew, as she pitches and rolls in the sea, her black sails blown full of heavy air and the light dimly seen through storm-clouds, looks like a wraith, a phantom boat, an exile hunted of men. We forget the material parts of the picture after a time, yet the idea haunts us. It keeps galloping through our brain like that dashing falconer of Fromentin. The painter holds us by his thought, his conception, precisely as the novelist makes us remember Lady Dedlock, Jean Valjean, or Harvey Birch, though we may hardly be able to recall a word they said or a thing they did.

The most enduring part of art, then, is the conception of the artist, and the embodiment of conception in form and color and their variations constitutes the highest aim of painting. But now from this you must not infer that sublime art is the only art worthy of consideration; nor must you infer that the art of poetic or artistic feeling, or even the art of technical skill, or natural beauty, is to be sneered at. Those who have produced great art are like the Shakespeares and the Goethes—but the few from the millions; and surely there are many poets and painters besides the greatest whom we may honestly admire. I have instanced only

the superlative cases to bring before you what I consider the highest art, to impress upon you the superiority of the conception over its realization or embodiment. There are grades of conceptions, ideas, impressions, feelings, of which we will speak hereafter. For the present we may rest content with the general statement that the highest aim of art is the expression of an idea, impression, or emotion, regarding something conceived, seen, or felt by the artist.

CHAPTER X.

IDEAS AND SUBJECTS.

We have arrived at the conclusion that painting is a means of conveying to the world an artist's ideas, impressions, or emotions precisely as poetry is the poet's method of revealing to mankind his conceptions and fancies. Be patient with my theories a little longer, for I must try to explain to you the kind of ideas fitted for representation in art. This is necessary, or you will become possessed of the notion that the idea in art is synonymous with the idea in literature; and this is an error into which you must not fall.

When one talks to the artists about ideas in pictures they immediately think you mean something literary—something that shall tell a story and hold you by the strength of the plot. This misconception is not with the painters alone, but, in fact, with the great majority of people. They seem to draw no line of distinction between the art of painting and the art of novel-writing, erroneously thinking the former but another way of producing the latter. The English and American people in particular, favor the "tell-a-story" art,

and a sentimental Sunday-school tale in paint is the notion of a picture entertained by a large majority of them. It is quite impossible to make people understand that there is such a thing as a *literary* conception, or a conception fitted for literature, and such a thing as a *pictorial* conception, or a conception fitted for pictures. There is little use in abusing the painter for not comprehending the field of his art when the poet and the novelist are likewise mistaken in their fields. The artist rambles out of his sphere to usurp the place of the novelist by telling a story, and the novelist goes out of his sphere to paint a picture with words. Let us try to fence off the arts in their several departments.

Ideas of all kinds are conveyed to the mind through the five senses. Three of these senses are not supposed to be æsthetic, or related to the arts, so we will cast them aside. They are the senses of smell, touch, and taste. The senses of sight and hearing remain, and we will confine ourselves to ideas conveyable through them alone. Those ideas which can be well told to the one sense have no reason for being poorly told to the other sense. There are things that beggar description, and they must be *seen* to be appreciated ; there are sounds the eye cannot take cognizance of, and they must be *heard.* Let me illustrate this. You, for instance, try to tell one of a certain place

where you have been; you try to describe it; you flounder in words, and at last, recognizing your poverty of language, you catch up a scrap of paper, draw a few lines, and point to them, saying: "There; it looks like that." What does this prove but that the ear will not adequately picture forms and that the eye will? The idea is pictorial, and requires to be told with line, shadow, or color, not with words. Take the face of a friend that you know well, and can you give to a stranger any word-description of that friend's face whereby the stranger could recognize it? Certainly not; but you bethink you of a photograph or portrait, it is brought, and the eye immediately conceives the image which the mind through the sense of hearing alone could not grasp. The idea again is pictorial.

Let us illustrate the other side of the case. Here is Childe Harold standing on the Alban Mount giving rein to his majestic thoughts on the enduring might of the ocean. How could it be painted? A picture might show a cliff, and a gloomy Byronic-looking man standing upon it, but how could the painter tell you what the man is thinking about? For all his frowning brow and gloomy look he might be thinking of yacht-racing, bank-stocks, or his own dyspeptic constitution. The idea is literary, and requires language, not form or color. Here, again, is Lady Dedlock

seated by the fire uneasily waving her fan, and opposite her is Mr. Guppy trying to extract from her by diplomatic talk her terrible secret. How do you know that they are Lady Dedlock and Mr. Guppy, and why will the picture not answer for Mr. and Mrs. Robinson just returned from a drive? What intimation can the painter give you of any terrible secret?

From this we may learn that there are certain features of life that must be described to the eye, and other features that must be told to the ear. Those features of which the eye takes chief cognizance, such as form, color, light, belong strictly to painting; while those which relate to abstract life, such as thought, speech, mood, or motive, belong to literature. External appearance can be much better pictured than described, and to do this is the painter's peculiar province; but if he goes beyond this, and tries to tell us what his characters have been doing, what they are thinking about, or what they are going to do, he oversteps the boundary of his art. He attempts something that can be better told in literature. The painter can portray what his characters are doing at the moment, and *suggest* what they anticipate doing the next moment. He may also *suggest* what they are thinking about at the present time, but this power of suggestion is limited in scope.

An instance in point is this "Missionary's

Story" by Vibert, already mentioned. You understand what the story is, or at least you imagine that the missionary is a returned pilgrim and is telling of all his strange adventures, pointing to his wounds by way of confirmation. But you never got that story from the picture except by a strong stretch of the imagination. You simply looked in the catalogue and read the title, and that gave you a slight foundation upon which to romance. A picture should be its own *raison d'être*, independent of any title whatever. When it requires a titular explanation it leans upon literature—an entirely unnecessary performance. Yet even then the picture under consideration is incomplete. You imagine the romantic side of the missionary's life, and fancy that he got the wound he is exhibiting while defending the faith in some distant land. I choose, for the sake of argument, to be iconoclastic, and imagine that he came by his wound in an altercation with the footman downstairs, and that he is now before the masters complaining of inhospitable treatment. Now look at the picture and see if it does not tell my story almost as truly as it does yours. Do you not see that, whatever story the picture is striving to tell, it is usurping the place of literature, and saying something to your eye which should be told to your ear?

Gérôme's tulip picture is another case in point.

You do not understand it, nor do you like it, because you fail to understand why that man is standing there among the flowers. Were the title a little more definite perhaps you would understand it better; but, as I have observed before, a painter should not paint his meaning in the catalogue with the letters of the alphabet. The meaning should be in the picture, not the title. Both pictures are bad, for in each case the motive is literary, not pictorial.

On the contrary, paintings that are strictly pictorial, and are beautiful in themselves independent of any title, exist by the thousands. The ancients almost always painted them (look at the Prophets and Sibyls in the Sistine again, the Crucifixions, the Descents, the Madonnas, and the Saints), and the moderns, especially the French, do likewise. The peasant figures of Millet, Breton, Israels, Frère, the dramatic pieces of Delacroix, the Eastern scenes of Decamps, Marilhat, and Fromentin, Corot's landscapes, Clay's sea pieces, Meissonier's horsemen, even Fortuny's armor and silks, Desgoffe's china, and Vollon's pumpkins, are all pictorial, and by any other names than those in the catalogue would look quite as beautiful.

Perhaps, then, it is unnecessary to further exemplify the limitations of painting. It cannot adequately tell a story, recite an epic, or depict a drama, but must confine itself to giving a view of

the appearance of things at the living moment. In other words, it must be *picturesque* and cannot effectively be *literatesque*. With the understanding, then, that it is the painter's province to set forth only pictorial conceptions and impressions, let us look about and see what conceptions usually find expression in painting, and what subjects they are generally portrayed in. And I wish to begin here by abusing that which is simply funny, pretty, vulgar, or low in art.

The burlesque and the ludicrous have no place whatever in serious painting. It may make you smile to see bears, monkeys, mice, rabbits, cats, and other animals dressed in men's clothing aping humanity, but allow me to say to you that it is not the proper aim of painting to make people smile. Black and white drawings of such things in our comic papers are well enough—in fact, enjoyable and healthy—but to paint them on canvas is a degradation of art akin to the appearance of the low comedy man in the sleep-walking scene from *Macbeth*. If you will look at the "Angelus"* of Millet long enough you will realize that art may make people weep, but is no end-man's medium for the production of horse-laughter. For myself I have little admiration for the comic scenes of life—the funny monk, the grotesque negro, the "smart" child, or the piquant soubrette—but you

*Secretan Collection, Paris.

will understand that this is perhaps a prejudice on my part. I cannot see that the comic has any more place in painting than in sculpture or architecture. It is much too earnest an art for jest, however light. But there are others who think differently.

Pass by the funny, at least, as quite unworthy of attention, and also, as a rule, the insipid. The pretty head in art is not unlike the pretty head in nature. There is generally little in it. Our modern "ideal" heads are merely weak imitations of some things that have been seen somewhere, somehow, by the artist, and reproduced from memory. Their worst fault is that they are quite devoid of character, and for that reason hold low rank in art. In their way they are pleasing enough, and do no harm, but they are not great. The works of Bouguereau and Henner have been spoken of already as illustrating this type. To be sure, these artists compensate for lack of character by strength in other features, but that is no argument for the pretty or the insipid.

Again, the paintings of the Impressionists, believers in paint for eccentricity's sake, will often show the absolutely inane without even the decorative effect of prettiness. They, too, have virtues of technical skill, but these do not wholly make up for their vices of choice. You may remember the "Pink Woman with Parrot"

and the "Boy with a Sword," by Manet, shown in the Bartholdi Loan Collection some years ago. The painting displayed in them was excellent, but the thinking would have disgraced a sixteen-year-old school-boy. The subjects were absolutely silly, and the woman and boy characterless idiots. About the only idea in the language of these artists is one regarding the dexterity of their fingers. Mentally compare the face of the woman by Manet with the face of the Delphic Sibyl by Michael Angelo, and you will see the difference between an artist of no imagination and one whose mental strength was even greater than his skill as a draughtsman. The portrait heads by Rembrandt, Franz Hals, Holbein, and Velasquez, however wrinkled or irregular in feature, when compared with the pretty or inane portraits of a Carlo Dolci or a Manet quickly prove how vastly superior and more beautiful is a characteristic face than one that is simply symmetrical in outline or stupid in its brilliancy of paint.

The low finds its way into art quite as often as the inane, and for it we are indebted to those who have been taught that *what* is painted is nothing as compared with *how* it is painted. It is not an uncommon performance for some of our so-called realists to drag in a wretched mendicant from the street and paint him just as he may be found. If it is not a beggar or a tramp, then it

is something of a kindred nature—a boot-black, a rag-picker, a hog's head on a chopping-block, a bar-room, a pig-sty, or a slaughter-pen. The artists find their warrant for the use of such material in some of the masterpieces of Dutch art. They point with pride to Jan Steen, Adriaan Brouwer, and even Rembrandt, and it must be admitted that many excellent pictures with just such subjects have been painted. Rembrandt's picture in the Louvre representing nothing but a "Dressed Beef" has been often instanced as a proof that the subject of a picture is of no consequence provided it is well painted. But the method of reasoning is delicious in its fallacy. Let us apply it. Rembrandt was clever enough to make a picture out of a slaughtered ox; *ergo*, slaughtered oxen are the best materials out of which to make pictures. The "Dressed Beef" is a *tour de force* of painting and color, that is all; and the works of Steen, Brouwer, and others of their ilk, succeed by virtue of splendid *technique* and a fresh manner of painting. Because a man of genius can conjure beauty out of ugliness, as a magician transforms a turnip into a rose, is no argument in favor of either ugliness or turnips. Regnault's "Execution without Judgment,"* Fortuny's "Butcher,"† and the horrors of Goya at Madrid are all beautiful, yet not because of their subjects, but rather in spite of them.

* Louvre, Paris. † Stewart Collection, Paris.

Let us, as a general rule, disregard the pretty, the inane, and the low in art, always, of course, making allowances for other excelling virtues. It would seem as though there were plenty of good art-material in the world, even in the commonplace, without resorting to the insipid or the repellent. An idea of a yellow pumpkin and an iron pot may not be the loftiest conception in the world, but it is not unpleasant, and when it is treated so artistically as it has been by Vollon * may be called beautiful—very beautiful. This may be true of fruits, flowers, game, rugs, draperies, china, brasses, armor, bric-a-brac, and *objets d'art* in general. Such things are not great in themselves, nor, as a rule, are those who paint them. The man of imagination can find little use for such materials; yet inasmuch as there are hundreds of good painters who are devoid of imagination, and must "realize" only what they see, it is perhaps better that they choose such subjects. Skill of hand, good grouping, color, and an artistic feeling, such as we have noted in Vollon, or such as may be seen in the Dutch, French, or Spanish schools, may elevate such work very far above decoration. There is a good deal in the doctrine of "paint for paint's sake," or of art in the artist. Baudry's line of the human form, Fortuny's walls and marbles, Madrazo's silks and satins, Zama-

* In the private collection of Mr. Wm. Schaus, New York.

çois's color, may each, of themselves, be sufficient to make a picture. To be sure such themes may be but pretexts to show the artist's power, and not his passion; but then let us be thankful for what we can get. We live in a very practical age, and the standard of merit is what one can do, and not what one can contemplate or think of doing.

In the same category with the bric-a-brac-Dresden china-fancy costume pictures, we should place those which seek only to convey an idea of "nature as she is" regarding studio interiors, drawing-rooms, taverns, streets, groups, animals, landscape. Lest you misunderstand, I wish to explain this last sweeping remark immediately. The simple forms that we all alike see in nature are no better for the reproduction upon canvas. A facsimile is not an improvement on the original. But when our artist adds to some natural beauty that which I have called his artistic feeling—his artistic view or treatment—then his picture is increased in value. This I have just explained by the instance of Vollon and others, and may further exemplify it in the art of Bouguereau, who has the poorest conceivable imagination, and is utterly devoid of sympathy and sentiment, yet draws the human figure with an artistic power wonderful to behold. A feeling for color, an enthusiasm, a fiery dash with the brush, rescue much of Fortuny's slighter work from the commonplace; and

the simple painting of faces, clothes, woods, and walls in Leibl's interiors* often makes us forget the slightness of his theme. These men are great technicians, and whatever they may do, howsoever slight it may be, you will find that they work with the sense and feeling of true artists.

When in addition to this painter's sense or feeling our artist begins to see things in nature that we do not, and place upon canvas what he alone sees, his picture is still more increased in value. He becomes an interpreter of hidden beauty, a revealer of unknown truths, a translator of an unwritten language. And now we come to look upon him as the possessor of what is called "poetic feeling." There is something of the poet in him; he sees farther, deeper, and truer than other men; and, not content with external form, he strives to bring forth the spirit of nature. You will note that now nature is being added to. The subjective element of thought or poetry in the man is coming in for recognition, and proportionately as this increases does his art advance and become stronger. This poetic feeling or peculiar view of nature may be seen in many of our American artists, especially among the younger landscape painters. (Yes, there are many excellent artists in America, and I would not advise you or any one else to sneer at

* Notably his "Peasants Reading." Stewart Collection, Paris.

them. They are not sneered at in Paris, and if you will read the leading art periodicals of Europe you may conceive a new and lofty respect for your fellow-countrymen.) It is very noticeable in the landscapes of Daubigny, Dupré, Corot, Diaz, and others of the French school, in the peasant figures of Millet, Breton, and Israels, and in the Eastern pieces of Decamps, Marilhat, and Fromentin.

In another work* I have called this poetic feeling an unconsciously conceived idea, a vague perception indistinctly seen and suggestively realized; and such I believe it to be. It has its origin, no doubt, in the peculiar manner in which the painter views nature, or in the effect which nature may produce upon his emotional temper, or in both together. He sees or feels something that surpasses his complete description, and which he can only faintly indicate in his picture. The art which gives us this suggestion only of hidden meanings is about as high as the average of genius ever attains, though there is a higher art which comes upon earth only with the birth of Shakespeares and Michael Angelos. But we should not be dissatisfied or ungrateful for the art which shows us only poetic feeling. The great artists come too rarely for us to treat the less ones lightly. Raphael painted many good pictures, but only one "Sistine

* *Principles of Art.* Part II, Chap. II.

Madonna,"* and so Corot painted much morning light, but only one great "Danse des Amours" and only one "Orpheus."† The difference between their many ordinary productions and their few masterpieces lies mainly in this that the latter convey great conceptions clearly outlined, while the former only suggest ideas of less importance.

The highest art of all, then, is that which consists in the expression of one grand idea with such force that every other thing is forgotten in its contemplation. This is the superlative of art, and this is the sublime. If you will study Turner without the Ruskin commentary, you will see somewhat of this in his suns and clouds. Mr. Ruskin tells you that he is great because he knew about the cleavages of rocks, spears of grass, sticks, stones, and trees, and that he was a great painter for one reason—because he painted these objects "true to nature;" but, with all respect for Mr. Ruskin, I beg of you not to believe any such thing. It would not be less erroneous to say that Shakespeare was great because he made a pronoun agree with its noun in gender, number, and person, or that Milton was sublime because he knew how to beat out the accent of an heroic line. People are not great by reason of small accomplishments, but because of great conceptions and revelations; and this is the case with Turner. His paintings are in some instances quite

* Dresden Gallery. † Cottier Gallery, New York.

sublime, because they tell the grandeur and glory of the sun and the clouds, and for no other reason whatever. To be sure, he was an artist who knew composition and drawing, but his detail and literal truth to nature were misfortunes rather than benefits to him. They trammeled his thought and hampered his rendering of it. A great deal of the art of Michael Angelo is sublime because of the majesty of power with which he infused every thing he touched, from the little wax models a few inches high in the Kensington Museum to the statue of Moses, stern, silent, and severe, upon his chair of stone. Rubens's "Christ on the Cross," at Munich, of which I spoke some time ago; the "Dead Warrior," attributed to Velasquez, in the National Gallery in London, and some of the work of Raphael and Leonardo may also be instanced as sublime art or its affinity. In modern times Delacroix came near to it in a number of pieces, like the "Shipwreck of Don Juan;" * Rousseau bordered upon it in his great landscapes, like "The Hut;" † and it is questionable if Millet did not reach it. Regnault and Fortuny might have achieved it had they lived, for their works showed phenomenal power; but, unfortunately, they were both cut down in early years, like half-blown flowers.

This, then, is the object of all expressive art: to convey by a symbolic language to people's minds

* Louvre, Paris. ‡ Secretan Collection, Paris.

through their eyes conceptions, impressions, ideas, or emotions of pictorial beauty. Sometimes these emanating from a master-mind are overpowering in their force, and are thus sublime, but oftener they come only from a sensitive mind and are simply poetic, suggesting certain moods and states of feeling. Oftener still the idea which the painter seeks to convey is merely one regarding some natural beauty of field, or valley, or mountain, or perhaps some pretty color-grouping of china, silks, or bronzes which please us by the artistic manner of their treatment. But, as we have already suggested, these minor beauties should not be despised. It is true that occasionally a brilliant comet moves majestically across our orbit, absorbing our wonder and admiration, but because we may have seen a comet we should not be forever after blinded to the beauty of the steadfast stars. Let us admire where admiration is due, nor cast aside the daisy because it is not like the rose. Each beauty of the world is an individual beauty, to be judged by its own nature, time, and surroundings, and not by comparison with other beauties. This is equally true of the artist. Listen attentively to what he may say, and judge him by his own speech and thoughts.

CHAPTER XI.

STYLE AND INDIVIDUALITY.

If the artist be possessed of thoughts it should make little difference how he expresses them, so that he really does set them fully before us. To be sure, there are rules of action in painting as in all things, and some of them I have already endeavored to point out, but the rules are general in their nature and leave plenty of scope for individual action.

An artist's style is simply his way or manner of saying things, and in this each painter may vary from his neighbor. There is no one inflexible law that can be laid down as a guide for them all. In this age of individualism almost every artist originates a style of his own, and the correctness or incorrectness of it is very much dependent upon whether it pleases or not.

To a great extent, style consists in the manner of putting on paint (though it may also relate to drawing, coloring, or composition), and in this the connoisseur, the amateur, and the artist take a vivid interest. The "average person," however, sees little in method, and, rightly enough from his point of

view, considers it lightly. Titian painted with his fingers, Rubens with his palette-knife, and many of the modern French and German pictures look as though they might have been painted with a mason's trowel or a whitewash-brush ; but all that should be of little consequence to you at first. Homer sang poetry, Milton dictated it, Coleridge dreamed it, Goethe wrote it, but what matters it to the reader how the poetry was obtained? He judges only by results. And so with pictures, he usually looks only to that which is accomplished. The seams of the Turkish rug in this picture by Bridgman* are not painted at all; on the contrary, they have been made by the edge of a palette-knife drawn through the thick, wet paint. There are lines cut across the canvas like the ruts in a country road. But stand back, and ask yourself if the effect is not capital. So, again, you may laugh at that ball of yellowish-white paint sticking to the leaves of a tree in Daubigny's "Cooper Shop;"† but if you will look at the picture from across the room you will see the startling effect of a sun shaft through the foliage. You should not get too close to pictures. It has passed into a proverb that the smell of paint is unhealthy. Place yourself at a distance where the picture appears to the best advantage ; and let me protest just here against

* "Allah Akbar," (?) by F. A. Bridgman.

† Morgan Collection.

the visiting of galleries with telescopes, lorgnettes, and magnifying glasses with which to enlarge the view of a picture. If one is near-sighted perhaps such things are permissible, but on general principles they should be condemned. Had the painter wished his audience to see his work on a larger scale he would undoubtedly so have painted it ; as he did not, let us by all means respect his wishes and get the view of it that he intended we should receive. Thus we shall do justice to him and give greater pleasure to ourselves.

It is often supposed that the excellence of a picture consists in the smoothness of the surface, the minuteness of the workmanship, or the thinness of the paint. If you possess that notion you would better abandon it. Nine times out of ten, thinness, smoothness, and the fine finish which give the Carlo Dolci-Denner appearance to a picture mark the weak man instead of the strong. There are writers who spend more time over their punctuation than their ideas, and there are painters of a similar nature. You may have received the idea that smoothness and finish mean greatness because, perhaps, you have seen these features in the works of Raphael and Leonardo ; but if such is the case you are simply admiring the shortcomings of those artists and not their excellences. Neither of them was a good *painter*, using that word literally. They excelled not by the use of

the paint-brush, but, primarily, by their great ideas. The earliest painting was but outline filled in with color. Leonardo, Michael Angelo, Raphael, and the Florentine school generally, did but little more. Splendid draughtsmen, fine composers, great thinkers, they were nevertheless thin painters and weak colorists. If you wish painting for paint's sake, by all means look to Titian, Velasquez, Rembrandt, Rubens, Van Dyke, Franz Hals, Watteau, Vollon, Fortuny. These men did something more than fill in inclosed space with color; they made line less rigid, made paint expressive, and really originated painting as distinguished from tinted drawing. In modern times there are some artists who have run to the other extreme, that is, all paint and no line—Monticelli, for instance;* but if you are wise you will take the mean course between them and give to the one no more importance than to the other.

Finish often has no other effect than that of making us feel sorry for the time-service and labor of the artist who produced it. We certainly cannot admire the man who paints with twenty strokes what another man paints with one; and we certainly must realize that a score of weak lines possess

* In justice to this artist it is worth while to say that his art aims only at color and light, and therein it is successful; but his obliteration of drawing can hardly be esteemed a virtue.

not the breadth and simplicity of a single strong one. Many an artist has spent days painting the shining interior of a brass pot; Vollon used to paint it (so says studio tradition) with one sweep of a large brush. Denner and the German painters of his time attempted the painting of hair by minutely drawing separate hairs, thus making each one a hundred times too large; those who followed sought to remedy the difficulty by painting it all in a lump. Here we have the two extremes again. But in the modern artists we find both manners are discarded, and the hair treated for its qualities of light and shade, color, texture, fluffiness, lightness, elasticity. So, again, some painters spend weeks painting the folds of a dress; Goya did it apparently in a second, with a single downward dash of the brush. Some elaborate a face with every wrinkle and hair in place; Adriaan Brouwer seems to have made a paint pie upon the canvas, and stirred it into facial expression with his finger.

Finish, as a general rule, argues lack of breadth, simplicity, and power, but this, of course, is subject to many exceptions, such as may be seen in the works of Gérôme, Bargue, Meissonier, Baudry, and others. The safe rule for the observer to follow at first is to discard the question of finish. Consider it as a thing neither for nor against, and look at the picture for its deeper meaning. There is a great deal of beauty in pure paint and the manner

in which it is manipulated by the artist, but you will not appreciate it until you have been viewing pictures for some years.

There is another kind of style, aside from brush-handling, color, or drawing, to which I wish to call your attention for a moment. I mean the characteristic style, or that which in a larger sense shows the character, or intellectual and moral bent of the man as well as the artist. It has as many forms as there are painters, and would require as many adjectives to illustrate it. For instance, there is the grand style of Michael Angelo and Velasquez, the majestic style of Leonardo, the beautiful style of Raphael, Andrea del Sarto, and Correggio, the ornate style of Titian and Tintoretto, the passionate style of Delacroix, the dignified style of Fromentin, the classic style of David, Ingres, and Bouguereau, the poetic style of Millet and Corot, the brilliant style of Fortuny, the strong style of Vollon and Bonnat, the insipid style of Meyer von Bremen, and the vulgar style of innumerable young Parisians who are to-day trying to make fine ladies out of chamber-maids and studio models. The list might be dragged out indefinitely, but in this case unnecessarily, for you will understand that the painter's style is analogous to that of the author, and that each is peculiar to its possessor and shows most truly the nature of the man. Here you must be your own judge, and like or

dislike the artist according as he appeals to you or leaves you cold. If you yourself are insipid, doubtless you will fancy the Madonnas and Magdalenes of Guido and Carlo Dolci, and the sweet children of Meyer von Bremen; if you are robust and strong of mind you cannot fail to like the great Velasquez.

In looking at a picture you must always take into consideration what the artist strives to accomplish, and you must further consider the man, his individual tastes, and the age in which he has lived. William M. Hunt has modestly said: "I might have painted had I lived in an atmosphere of art, but in America every thing resolves itself into the getting of money and selling a poor article instead of a good one;" and there is much truth in the remark. To be sure, the world judges by what is produced, and not by what might have been produced, and that is right enough; but even so, a man must be estimated by his time and surroundings, and not by present or academic standards. To condemn Dürer because he placed German barns on Calvary's height, and Rubens because he painted Paris, in the "Judgment of Paris," with a Dutch hat and coat upon him, is very ridiculous. Dürer and Rubens in company with the artists of their different times painted only what they saw, and to them a matter of historic detail never was a matter of art. The truth of history in painting is of

secondary importance at best, and the continual fire of criticism aimed at pictures because, forsooth, the costume of Henry IV. appears in one when it should be of the time of Francis I., or the face of an apostle in another is Italian when it should be Jewish, is as captious and ill-judged as the criticism of a marine because in it, perchance, a streamer blows one way and a cloud of smoke another way. Do not fret your soul about such trifling matters. Their appearance, of course, does not improve the picture, but they do little harm. You are not supposed to be looking for what flaws you can find, but rather for what virtues the picture possesses. If the sun warm you and light you sufficiently you need not find fault because there are some spots upon it.

Judge each man by his own methods, and, again let me say, look for the artist's meaning. You know in the novel we take up Dumas and Sue for plot, Georges Sand and Hugo for narrative and description, Howells and James for character analysis, Poe and Stevenson for the weird and uncanny; and why should we not do the same thing in painting? Bouguereau, for instance, is admirable in what he strives to set forth. He was educated as a classicist and believes in the absoluteness of form, and in this you will note that he is quite perfect. There never was a better draughtsman, and for that accomplishment he deserves much credit. Corot

was an entirely different manner of man. Nature to him was a matter of light, and to render this was his endeavor. Michael Angelo's art was simply a revelation of power. He strove to express the strength of his nature in sculpture and in painting, and if you have seen his works you know how well he succeeded. Millet, Vollon, Gérôme, Fortuny, Winslow Homer, Dewing, are radically different from one another, and must be credited with the amount of success they have achieved in what they have aimed at. Comparisons are odious, and above all are they odious in art. To denounce Millet because he was not Gérôme, or Gérôme because he is not Millet, is childish and irrational. A difference in inquisitorial days generally led to the stake, but let us hope we are out of the barbarism of burning one person because not like another person. Each in his place, perhaps, is good, and deficiency, not difference of view, can alone condemn a man.

The first move in the examination of a picture is to look to the work of the fingers—the drawing, coloring, massing, painting. If it is bad there is little use to examine further. The artist may be a deep thinker, a poet of imagination, a creator of no mean ability; but if he knows not how to express himself of what use are his talents, his thoughts, his imaginations? A thorough knowledge of the language of art is a prerequisite to ex-

pression. If, therefore, this prerequisite is shown to be in the possession of the artist the next move is to find out what he wishes to say. You may not like his thoughts, you may not agree with his views of life and nature, but at any rate give him the benefit of a few moments' consideration. If you know him to be a celebrated artist and yet cannot see into the sources of his greatness, by all means find out from artists or competent judges what is the admirable feature of his work, and make a study of it.

You will not comprehend a great artist at first glance any more than you will fully appreciate Shakespeare on the first reading. It takes time and close observation, and in the beginning you will be distracted by seeming blemishes. For instance, it will be a long time before you will appreciate the light, air, and poetic feeling of Corot. The "painty" grass and the "splashy" trees will distract your attention, and you will not see other features. So with Millet; the homely, almost stolid, faces of his peasants will not be pretty enough for you, and you will not go further and see the deep meaning of the man. As for Delacroix, one of the greatest of the moderns, it will be many a day before you will be able to see through his "queer" drawing and "queerer" painting to his dramatic force and his expression of moods and passions. Time and the examination of many pictures will

alone bring you proficiency in the discernment of an artist's meaning. There is no royal road to knowledge in judging of pictures any more than in other things, and that which is easily known is generally not worth knowing.

And, lastly, it is perhaps unnecessary to suggest that you look for that quality in a picture which you will almost certainly feel whether you will or no—the individuality of the artist. People differ mentally as they do physically. No two are precisely the same, and some we like and some we dislike, and the reason of it is simply that their individuality is pleasing or displeasing to us. This characteristic, which marks every one apart from his fellow man, is apparent in all art as in all life. It is but the appearance of the man in his work, the subjective element, of which I spoke some time ago. The individual is peculiarly constituted, with certain faculties, powers, emotions, motives, and his thoughts, moods, deeds, expressions, are modified by his peculiar make-up. In some cases these limitations of nature or of *entourage* make the eccentric man, in others the individual man, and again in others the self-reliant, positive, self-assertive man. And somewhat of the man, whatsoever he may be, finds its way into his work and tinctures the whole. This is individuality, and when in art it is so strong that it commands us it is sometimes called genius.

Individualism has become strongly pronounced during the present century; having begun with what is known in history as the Romantic movement, and appearing almost simultaneously in literature, music, sculpture, and painting, so that to day a work of art usually represents only the peculiar view of its creator. We shall find it a pleasing quality in art, notwithstanding the realists and classicists would have us believe in the obliteration of the man in his work. For, after all, the chief satisfaction in work lies in the individual qualities of the worker, whom we come to know through his products.

In a certain sense a picture is but the record of an artist's life, the autobiography of the man. All the power in Michael Angelo's art which so impresses us is but the power of his personal character, and the grandeur of Rousseau's landscapes is only the record of Rousseau's lofty mind. Study the canvas closely, and in it you will find the man. Raphael's character was as beautiful and fair as his Sistine Madonna; Fra Angelico's was as devout and angelic as his trumpet-blowing angels; Corot's as full of soft radiance as the light of Ville d'Avray; and Millet's "Sower" is but the embodiment of Millet, the peasant-painter. It is chiefly the man, his views and ideas, that make the canvas glow with life, and not the bare facts—the alphabet which he uses in speech.

CHAPTER XII.

OILS, WATER-COLORS, PASTELS—CONCLUSION.

In conclusion, it may not be out of place to say something regarding the principal mediums of pictorial expression, such as oil, water-color, pastel, and what they are best suited to express, though, of course, I cannot go into detail about them at this time. If you would inquire further I can do no better than refer you to Mr. Hamerton's excellent work on *The Graphic Arts*, the existence of which makes any thing but sketchy comment unnecessary here.

To-day the commonest and best medium in painting is that of oil. All sorts of ideas, conceptions, and fancies may find expression in it, and in its nature it is well fitted to convey them all, whether they be light, sober, brilliant, or grand. Its durability beyond other mediums is not of so much importance in artists' eyes as its freshness, its brightness, its facility for expressing by brush-work shades of meaning, phases of character, types of individuality, and its facility of retaining colors intact and without mingling (except by reflection) with other colors. In literature the

gay, the clever, and the brilliant, are set forth in the light form of the lyric, the quatrain, or perhaps the novel; but that which is of a deep and serious nature requires epic verse or the more sober form of simple prose. The analogy holds true of painting. The profound, the sublime, the poetic require translation through the medium of oil. Therefore it is in oil that we may look for a painter's best efforts, his deepest thoughts, his most harmonious color, his strongest *technique*. This, however, is only a general rule, and is subject to some exceptions.

There is no very good reason why water-color should not be considered just as serious a medium as oil, except the fact that it is not generally so used. Every once in a while some one comes out in print to defend the power, durability, color, and general excellence of water-color as compared with oil, and much can be said in its favor. But the truth nevertheless remains that people, especially the artists, do not think so (a popular belief is a hard thing to eradicate), and so, with a few exceptions, the water-color medium is used very much as the lyric is used in poetry, to express something light and sketchy. Whatever may be the merits of the case, therefore, it is hardly worth your time to look to water-color for any thing of a deep or serious nature. You would better seek that which you will oftenest find,

namely, sketchy pieces of beauty, bright flashes of the imagination, cleverness of handling, light, transparency of color, atmosphere, tone, cloud and water effects, but not, as a general thing, for qualities and textures. These latter can, perhaps, be better expressed in oil. Moreover, in water-colors detail is usually sacrificed to truth of mass, and you will not look for drawing except as subordinate to other features. The medium is not well suited for elaborated work, though this again has been made subject to some very brilliant exceptions.

The great majority of artists look upon water-color as a medium out of which they can get some recreation. In America about once a year the fancy for it seizes upon the artist, and for a time he relaxes his more arduous labor with oil and becomes a singer in a lighter strain. It is a very beautiful medium, and because it is perhaps not so serious as oil it should not for that reason be set down as trivial or worthless any more than Italian or French music should be utterly cast out because it is not like the music of the Germans.

Pastel, or the drawing with colored crayons, is not unlike water-color in its nature—that is, it aims at the expression of lighter things than are set forth in oil. It has been called a medium wherewith effects are produced by accident; but do not believe any thing so silly. In art there is

nothing produced by accident that is of any consequence—and the pastel drawing *is* of consequence. As a medium for making sketches and catching vanishing effects of color pastel is much used, and of late years it has been put to good service in portraiture and *genre*, especially by our American artists—Messrs. Chase, Beckwith, Blum, Blashfield, and others. Like the water-color, its strength does not lie in form or line, though it may be so used, but in color-brightness, tone, and textures. It is especially well adapted to the rendering of light fluffy materials, like hair, woolens, rugs, feathers, fabrics, clouds, smoke, and it has been used with great success in flesh tones and even in the rendering of marbles and bronzes. Like water-color again, there is scarcely any limit to what it *may* express, but the artists put a limit upon what it *does* express by using it usually for light work. It is quite useless to quarrel with a grounded custom, even if we were so disposed, and we must try to see what artists ask us to see, and not allow ourselves to imagine vain things regarding what we would like to see.

Fresco and tempera are so little used to-day that comment upon them is unnecessary. Pen and inks, charcoals, sepias, and monochromes in general are essentially sketchy in nature, often made as memoranda, and when exhibited are chiefly designed to show some happy fancy or clever drawing. Etch-

ing, though not painting, is closely connected with painters, by whom it is chiefly used. It is so well known nowadays, not only through the numbers of etchings (mainly bad ones) that are produced, but through many treatises written upon it, that I need say little. A very common and natural mistake which most people fall into regarding it is that it is an attempt to rival wood, copper, or steel engraving. Such is not its proper design, though many artists try to make it serve that purpose. An etcher works on a copper-plate covered with wax, through which he draws whatever suits his fancy. The needle or point with which he draws removes the wax wherever it touches, and after the plate is finished it is submerged in acid with the effect that the plate, where the lines are drawn, is bitten into or corroded by the acid. Afterward the plate is cleaned, inked, and printed from like the plate of a visiting card. Engraving, on the contrary, is the cutting upon wood or metal with the graver, and the engraver usually follows not his own design, but the design of an artist before him. The aim of the engraving is more like that of the photograph: to give detail with exactness, and yet maintain the character of the original design. The aim of the etching is to convey certain features, like atmosphere, light and shade, form, motion, values, in a light yet telling manner. As a general rule, the etcher, like the draughtsman with pen and ink,

strives to do as much as possible with a few well-directed lines; to give character, force, and suggestiveness, without detail or great elaboration. Where you find an etching so finished in detail that you have to look at the paper for the press mark in order to be sure of what it is, you will generally find not only a poor unsuggestive etching, but a bad substitute for an engraving.

In viewing pictures you should look to landscapes for color, tone, atmosphere, light and shade, qualities, sentiment, feeling, pictorial poetry, and, in such artists as Rousseau, for ideas of sublimity and grandeur. As a rule, however, the landscape does not often rise to the sublime, and for the reason which, if arbitrary, you will consider quite my own, that it lacks concentration and active power. Where the sublime appears, as in Niagara, and the Alps, it is too overpowering for conception or expression. More often landscape presents the novel, the poetic, and the simply beautiful, with special beauties of color and qualities.

In figure compositions look for the pictorial in drawing, grouping, gradation of light, color, and textures. It is the great field for what is called "solid painting," as may be instanced in the work of Titian, Rembrandt, Rubens, and Velasquez. You will further look for dramatic effect, conceptions of passion or of power, and for character. This last quality is absolutely necessary in all

great work. The symmetrical and well drawn alone will not do. There must be something of vital force about the people composing the picture, otherwise it drops into the shallow and worse than mediocre, *vide* Meyer von Bremen, whom having now sufficiently abused, I return to his admirers.

The same advice may be offered regarding portraits. The chief aim is not necessarily to gain a striking likeness, but a characteristic likeness—that which shows the character of the sitter. Denner painted the life-like in such a manner that the heads seemed to actually exist, but he spent so much time upon wrinkles, freckles, and three-days-old beards, that he forgot to put forth the deeper nature of the man. The outside was all there, but the inner man was absent. Van Dyke, on the contrary, saw beneath the surface, and read a man's character between the lines. That is one reason why he is to day considered the greatest portrait-painter that ever lived, while Denner is but a museum curiosity, exciting the admiration of the ignorant. Discard the idea of a portrait being proved good by the eyes of it following you around the room. That is but an illusion of perspective. The eyes that follow are not those of the portrait, but those of the spectator. You would better look to the face being well drawn, the flesh possessed of some blood, and not covered with oiled paper,

and the clothes being clothes, instead of a suit of sheet-iron.

In *genre* and still-life, the chief attractions should be artistic grouping, harmonious coloring, effects of light, and strong *technique*. You may think that an artist who paints a silver urn, a tray, some tea-cups, a tablecloth, and a vase of flowers paints them just as he happens to find them; but such is not the case. In so simple a subject as that there is room for fine grouping, and relations of light and color, and the true artist always places each object for the best advantage of them all before touching brush to canvas. In marines, color is not usually so prominent as gray tone, atmospheric effect, light, cloud masses, and power in the water. But power does not mean necessarily the theatrical splash of an enormous wave on a mountainous cliff, or the crested curl of an incoming breaker. You can easily imagine power in a sleeping lion, and there is might in the ocean, though it may be as smooth as a glassy lake. But it requires an artist like Dupré or Courbet to reveal it. Interiors, court places, street scenes, with men, horses, camels, and the like, give the opportunity for fine effects of atmosphere, light and shade, warmth, color, motion, life. Decamps, Fromentin, Regnault, Fortuny, Rico, and others have so used them, and with what brilliant results I have, perhaps, already sufficiently set forth.

I cannot better conclude this talk than by repeating something said at the beginning of it: Books and theories will not give you a practical knowledge of art, though they may help you to it, and if this effort of mine has benefited you in any way I shall feel well repaid for occupying my rather uncomfortable position; but if you would thoroughly know art you must study it in the original tongue, and not through interpreters. You must look at pictures studiously, earnestly, honestly. It will take years before you come to a full appreciation of art, but when at last you have it you will be possessed of one of the purest, loftiest, and most ennobling pleasures that the civilized world can offer you.

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